HETEROTOPIC FRICTIONS

VISUALLY PROBLEMATISING IDENTITY, TERRITORY AND LANGUAGE FROM AN ANGLO-WELSH PERSPECTIVE

Paul Robert Steven Jones

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Aberystwyth University

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Summary of the Thesis/Abstract

This PhD is a response to how little evidence there is of visual artists from an Anglo-Welsh background making works that interrogate the complexity of their identity compared to those who define themselves as Welsh-speaking, many of whom passionately celebrate and defend their sense of Welshness. I question my perceptions of identity, territory and language, playing with conflicting readings of culturally driven constructs of Welshness, Britishness and hyphenated identity.

To explore this question, I developed an artistic inquiry that utilises flags, geographical borders and language as artistic mediums. These geographical markers are used in low-key interventions that oscillate between pathos and humour and are a way to visualise my internal struggles when trying to define identity, especially in an epoch where issues of belonging are increasingly polarised. This artistic inquiry approach was chosen due to my background as an artist and the belief that artistic practice is knowledge producing.

The first three chapters include a theoretical reading of flags, borders and language, and an investigation into relevant art practitioners. Each chapter is followed by a write-up of the connected artistic inquiry. In the concluding chapter, exhibition as method is evaluated through a discussion of *Frontier Territory*, held at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, and its related symposium 'Ant*agonistics*: Identity, Nationhood and Territory'.

The research highlighted a need for a methodology to explore the relationship between identity, territory and language as sites of conflict where a sense of cultural orientation is constantly being challenged, defended and re-defined. The term 'heterotopic friction' emerged from a reading of Chantal Mouffe (2013) and Michel Foucault (1986). In this thesis, I argue that, as a methodology, heterotopic friction allows for a subjective opening up of a plurality of spaces between identity, territory and language, exposing tensions as the imagined meets the actual.

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I would like to thank my colleagues at Wrexham Glyndŵr University for allowing me the space and time to undertake the research.

Finally I would like to thank my family, who have been so patient and who have shown great belief in me, as always.

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List of Illustrations

Guide to Viewing the Art Practice Elements (Artistic Inquiry)

As a significant part of the PhD, the practice component (artistic inquiry) is presented on the accompanying data card. The data card includes a series of approaches to viewing the art practice and research. Each approach can be understood in terms of levels: *immediate*, *presentation* and *deep map*.

The *immediate* level contains a folder of selected artworks (File: **ARTWORK**) and a PDF version of the thesis (File: **Heterotopic_Frictions**). In the PDF the reader can click on a hyperlink, coloured blue and underlined.[1] This will open a new window to view the artwork being discussed. The *presentation* level contains a slideshow (File: **ARTISTIC INQUIRY**) that includes images and video of significant pieces of work together with documentation of research, design work, proposals and commentary. The slideshow can be viewed alongside the reading of the thesis.

At the *deep map* level, the data card contains four main folders:

Artistic Inquiry: BORDERS

Artistic Inquiry: FLAGS

Artistic Inquiry: LANGUAGE

FRONTIER TERRITORY EXHIBITION

Each of these folders contains examples of artworks, research documentation and evidence of studio practice. Formats include MP4, RAW files, JPEGs, TIFF, WAV, Adobe Premiere Pro, Photoshop and Illustrator files.

The following commentary is an overview of the contents of these folders:

Folder: Artistic Inquiry: BORDERS

This folder contains examples of two artworks: ***Croeso I Gymru*** (2008) and ***Guardians of the Border*** (2016). ***Croeso I Gymru*** (2008) is a three-minute video, filmed on mini-dv tape, transferred to MP4. ***Guardians of the Border*** (2016) consists of a video file that gives an overview of the performance and a video still. **Guardians of the Border RESEARCH** file

[1] Please use Adobe Acrobat Reader to open this PDF as hyperlinks do not work in Preview

contains a collection of documentation of research and performance. The research included site visits; an interventionist performance staged at the bridge in which a sign was erected on the English side of the bridge indicating it is in Wales (File: **Croeso Sign**). The folder **DOCUMENTATION OF PERFORMANCE** includes a series of photographs taken by contracted photographers and audience members at the performance of *Guardians of the Border*. This folder includes an MP4 video of the event commissioned by Oriel Wrexham. There is also evidence of the poster design for the event that was used in the publicity campaign.

Folder: Artistic Inquiry: FLAGS

This folder is split into two folders. **Prydeindod** and **Iaith Pawb** folders hold documentation of the artwork, evidence of their submission to the National Eisteddfod 2014, and a folder containing documentation of the design process. This design process included experimenting with colour, font and format. In the folder **Prydeindod The Walk** is an MP4 video of the performance (File: **Prydeindod performance WRX no voice over**, MP4, duration: approx. 3 min 34 sec). The folder **Prydeindod The Walk RESEARCH** has the raw video and photographs taken during the performance (File: **Documentation of Performance**), a separate folder that includes four different versions of the film, edited to various lengths. The folder **Interview with Dr. Rebecca Woodford Smith** includes a MP4 and WAV file of the interview between the researcher and Dr Woodford-Smith, who is a performance practitioner and senior lecturer on the BA (hons) Theatre, Television and Performance at Wrexham Glyndŵr University. Folder **Prydeindod collage test** contains a series of collage pieces that expand the performance into other mediums. Finally, a folder of voice over outtakes in WAV format has been included, all of which were used to create the final edit in the performance video with voice over.

Folder: Artistic Inquiry: LANGUAGE

This folder contains eight examples of artistic inquiries. In the folder **Cymhwyster** is a JPEG of an artwork submitted to the National Eisteddfod in 2008. It is a digital print, approx. 420 mm by 594 mm in size. Folder **Internal Exile** includes a JPEG taken from the performance ***Internal Exile***, which was an interventionist performance at the National Eisteddfod in 2011 and presented again in a photographic format at the Eisteddfod in 2012. ***Wälschen*** is a film shown in the National Eisteddfod in 2010. It is an MP4 video file, duration 45 sec, single channel, transferred to MP4 from mini-dv tape. Examples of Google and Bing English-to-

Welsh translations are filed in the **Welsh Dunce Twpsyn Machine Translator** folder. Within the **Welsh Dunce Twpsyn RESEARCH** folder are a series of video, JPEGS, texts and sound files documenting the progression of the studio practice based on this topic, the outcomes of which can be viewed in the folders **Welsh Dunce Twpsyn Version 1, Welsh Dunce Twpsyn Version 2** and **Welsh Dunce Twpsyn Welsh Lesson.**

Folder: FRONTIER TERRITORY EXHIBITION

Grouped in this folder is evidence of organising the exhibition at Aberystwyth Arts Centre (AAC) in 2018. The folder **Frontier Territory RESEARCH** contains all the documentation relating to the exhibition, the initial proposal and preparatory work (folders: **AAC Exhibition Journal Entries sketched and notes** and **Exhibition Design Development**). There is documentation of the re-editing of specific works (Folder: **Mountain Top footage**) and organising of the symposium (Folder: **Symposium**). Also included is a document advertising for dancers, which was part of an idea that was not executed due to time constraints (File: **call for dancersTIRIOGAETH Y FFIN**). Finally, in this section there is also a folder of JPEGs showing the exhibition as outcome (Folder: **Images of Exhibition and PPT of Putting together Exhibition**). The folder **Hiraeth Darn No2** contains evidence of research for an exhibition at Oriel Ynys Mon in 2017. The folders include press releases, JPEGs of the work in situ, studio development studies and research into the Welsh language project *Iaith Pawb*. The **Rendition Eryr Wen White Eagle** folder holds the definitive version of the *Rendition* (2016) MP4 video, duration 6 min (File: **Rendition**). Alongside this is a folder containing the studio practice and research, edits, audio, and visual references that shaped and informed the work. In the folder **Republic of Flintshire** is an MP4 video piece entitled ***Rep Fli 3.4 ratio reedit Sept 2018***, which is the video work shown as part of the *Frontier Territory* exhibition at AAC and is 3 min 58 sec in duration. In this folder is also a JPEG of the ***Republic Manifesto.*** The folder **RoF Research** includes evidence of the studio practice and background research that informed the artistic inquiry. ***Y Wal*** is a video piece presented at AAC for the *Frontier Territory* exhibition. The MP4 video is 4 min in duration. The folder **Y Wal Research** holds documentation of the voice over, script, and experiments into digital video.

Introduction

Wales has a rich history of artists engaged in culturally and politically motivated art. Many writers, visual artists and performers have explored Welsh identity from the perspective of a Welsh-speaking minority, often warning of the threat to Welsh culture and national identity through the loss of the language. These include Welsh-speaking artists such as Iwan Bala, Eddie Ladd, Carwyn Evans and Sara Rhoslyn Moor. However, I propose that little consideration has been given to how issues of national identity are experienced and explored by visual artists born in Wales who are English-only speakers, such as myself.

In this research *through* art practice-based PhD, I deliberately problematise my relationship between identity, territory and language. The art practice visually explores how my anxieties and vulnerabilities, in identifying as Anglo-Welsh, manifest themselves and are performed. My identity and its relationship to language and place is full of contradictions. This is vividly brought forth through the artistic inquiry that, through low-key provocative interventions, oscillates between absurdity and pathos, and deliberately exaggerates the potential challenges and threats to my sense of national identity.

In this thesis, I introduce the term 'heterotopic friction' to frame a subjective opening up of a plurality of spaces between identity, territory and language, and to expose tensions where the imagined meets the actual. Significantly influenced by Michel Foucault's investigation of heterotopia and Chantel Mouffe's agonistic politics, I define 'heterotopic friction' as where alternative narratives or realities are imagined, graft onto, or disrupt actual places.

The principal investigation of the PhD includes:

1. Problematising the relationship between identity, territory and language to create unique artistic responses,
2. A description of heterotopic friction and how it can operate as a methodology in artistic practice,
3. Situating my artwork within contemporary debates concerning art practice and the politics of territory, language and identity, and
4. The attainment of self-knowledge through an investigation of how I experience identity in relation to territory and language through artistic practice, with the intention of this knowledge being of valuable cultural significance.

Each artistic inquiry locates and imagines heterotopic frictions at specific geographical markers. For this investigation, I focus on borders, flags and language, as these have frequently been referenced in my art practice prior to the commencement of the PhD. Each chapter involves an examination of relevant literature and a contemporary art practice review. This is followed by a discussion and analysis of the artistic inquiry produced in response to the specific geographical marker. I propose that my contribution to culture includes my own artistic practice as a method by which identity, territory and language are imagined and visualised.

The inquiry seeks to transcend the position of self (solipsism) and have an impact on the wider community of practice (academics, artists) and society (audience). The hope is for the wider questions and resonances of my inquiry to be of worth to scholars in the disciplines of geopolitics, visual and performance art, culture studies, anthropology and ethnography.

On the Use of the Term 'Anglo-Welsh' to Define Identity

I propose that this PhD is unique in that it is explored from a problematised Anglo-Welsh position. Originally adopted in literary circles as a term to describe what is now called Welsh writing in English, in this thesis I define 'Anglo-Welsh' as referring to a construction of identity that is complicated by both language and geography. I am aware that I am unable to explore or speak of every concept of Welshness. Any attempt to define Welshness, Britishness or hyphenated identity that is investigated in this thesis emerged from a personal crisis of positionality. I am also aware that 'Anglo-Welsh' is a problematic term. It can be an incendiary declaration against more progressive attitudes that promote unity under one national identity. But it is a useful term in the context of my inquiry because of its potential to create friction when used.

The term 'Anglo-Welsh' allows me to comprehend and order my own construction of identity. I am attentive to the fact that putting the 'Anglo' prefix before 'Welsh' creates tension. Why not use 'Welsh-English', 'Welsh-Anglo', or 'English-speaking Welsh'? Could any one of these situate and problematise my position just as satisfactorily? I believe that the use of 'Anglo-Welsh' exposes my own crisis of identity. By using the term 'Anglo-Welsh' I consider myself to be defined firstly by a British identity, as an English speaker, and then secondly by identifying with elements of Welshness, that is, being born, living and working in Wales.

'Anglo-Welsh' has been described as an unfashionable, outdated hybrid term, or in some cases a bastard term that should be avoided. It has been supplanted by a preference for the inclusive use of 'Welsh' as a descriptor. In their study *One Wales? Reassessing Diversity in Welsh Ethnolinguistic Identification* (2006), Nikolas Coupland, Hywel Bishop and Peter

Garrett recognised that many of the informants questioned affiliated their identity with the term 'Welsh' rather than with 'British' or a hyphenated version. As a matter of interest, analysing data from surveys conducted in 2020 by Survation for Plaid Cymru and other YouGov polls on Welsh independence, YesCymru, in their publication *Towards an Independent Wales* (2020), found that an inclusive Welsh identity is more likely to be claimed by people under thirty-five, whilst older people, like myself, tend to associate themselves with being either Welsh, British or of hybrid identity (Commission, 2020).

My use of the term 'Anglo-Welsh' stems from wanting to find a distinctive way to explain the complexities of my relationship to national identity from the perspective of being born so close to the border of North East Wales. My sense of belonging has been significantly shaped by the context of living close to the border of Wales and England and a lack of Welsh language acquisition. Unlike younger generations, whose education has been shaped by an absolutely inclusive use of Welsh language and Welsh cultural studies at school,[2] the proposal of a liberal and inclusive approach to being Welsh has not been my experience. Living in what could be considered geographically marginal places affects how the local populace experience their identity. Dafydd Evans (2007) argues that people living in the north eastern parts of Wales construct their sense of national belonging at local, regional and national levels. His conclusions call for an awareness of the specifics of an area, which is important for understanding people's sense of belonging or exclusion in terms of national-level presentations of identity (Evans, 2007). Interestingly, in their report Coupland et al. highlighted that in Flintshire and Denbighshire, informants identifying as either Welsh or

[2] As promoted by the *Iaith Pawb* policy (2003). An emphasis on 'one Wales' is significant for the Welsh Assembly Government's *Iaith Pawb* (Everyone's Language) policy, the success of which is evident in how a younger generation of Welsh people now identify themselves as solely Welsh.

British tended to designate their identity as British marginally more so than Welsh-identifying in the region (Coupland, Bishop, & Garrett, 2006). Living so close to England has shaped my sense of cultural identity, which, I would argue, has been conflictual due to the presence of 'mixed identity markers' in the region as highlighted by Roberts (2010) and Evans (2019). Importantly, my experience has been one of living in a part of Wales complicated by linguistic division, cultural ambivalence, contradictions and antagonisms. This experience has conflicted with national claims of identity, and due to being so closely influenced by both English and Welsh cultural markers, is more hybrid in shape. In *Postcolonialism Revisited: Writing Wales in English* (2004), Kirsti Bohata recognises that the borderland of Wales is 'imbued with enormous significance' (Bohata, 2004, p. 7). Not limited to the typical binaries that characterise boundaries, Bohata approaches the 'permeability and instability of the extensive borderlands between Wales and England' through the lens of 'postcolonial paradigms of hybridity, which emphasise constantly shifting transcultural production' (Bohata, 2004, p. 7). For Bohata, Wales is not a coherent whole, but constructed through hybridity. The conflicts inherent in such a definition are acknowledged and it 'becomes an enabling and productive, if ambivalent, internal discourse' (Bohata, 2004, p. 157), an in-between space that allows for productive but complex cultural debate to be performed, 'without the risk of shattering the nation into meaningless fragments' (Bohata, 2004, p. 157). Situating the term within postcolonialism, Bohata describes hybridity as connected to cultural and transcultural exchanges. It represents the in-between spaces of cultural production, as argued by Homi Bhabha (1994), and can include experiences of alienation and dislocation (Bohata, 2004, p. 129). Hybridity can also provide a space from which to see cultural difference (Bohata, 2004, p. 129), where self-division, dislocation and alienation can emphasise complexities of discourse on identity. For me, the spaces that

accentuate complexity that Bohata describes are where the heterotopic friction occurs, which is explored throughout the thesis and artistic inquiry.

Similarly, Chris Williams, in *Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality* (2005), argues that rather than the obsession with cultural identity in the singular, there has been a move to encompass 'concepts of situation or multiple identities' (Williams, 2005, p. 15). Through the examination of hybridity, post-nationality and ambivalence, Williams aims to break down a reading of the 'internalized divisions' in Wales, such as that proposed by Denis Balsom (1985). Although aware that his proposal suggests a kind of utopianism, Williams asserts that without grappling with the problematics of identity and acknowledging its hybridity of forms, Wales faces a future entrenched in an imagined nation binary mentality (Williams, 2005). Whilst I am sympathetic to the inclusive nature of a singular national identity, for me, it is too one-dimensional. To define myself as exclusively Welsh removes the complexity from my identity.

Methods and Methodology: Orientating the PhD as Research through Art Practice

Common approaches to an inquiry into identity and place reside in the social sciences and depend on interviews and analysis of surveys (Balsom, 1985; Evans, 2007; Evans, 2019; Jones & Fowler, 2007). I argue that this study is notable in its use of artistic inquiry as a method of research into identity and place from an Anglo-Welsh perspective. In this section, I examine how artistic inquiry is knowledge generating. My reason for giving this extended account of the relationship between art and research is to justify the range of personalised methodologies for examining perceptions of identity, territory and language through the art

practice. I begin by assessing the various approaches to thinking about art practice as research.

The Structure of an Art Practice as/-led/-based Research Model

Many terms are used to describe how art practice is employed as a research method. These include *practice-based research, studio practice, artistic research* (Arlander, 2013, p. 154), *practice integrated research, performative research* (Little, 2013, p. 121), *research for/through/into art and design* (Frayling, 1993) and *practice-led research* (Gray, 1996). Much has been written and discussed regarding the pros and cons of such approaches (Barrett, 2010 ; Biggs & Karlsson, 2011; Bolt, 2014; Elkins, 2009; Gray & Malins, 2004; Nelson, 2013; Schön, 1991; Sullivan, 2005). However, all emphasise the importance of practice in producing new knowledge.

The word 'practice' can cover a range of actions. As a term used within the arts, it principally describes the creative activity, in essence, the making. This PhD includes making work for research purposes. The advantage to approaching the research *through* practice is that meaning is generated through experiential activity, which leads to a deeper understanding of how artistic research can be knowledge producing (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 105). However, Gray and Malins also stress that the disadvantage of practice is that it could be open to criticism in terms of self-indulgence or over-subjectivity, if the researcher's methodologies lack transparency (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 105). This concern as to the research simply becoming self-indulgent is one of which I am very much aware. Barbara Bolt, in her essay 'Beyond Solipsism in Artistic Research' (2014), argues that in order to combat this, there must be a focus on the impact of work, that is, how it operates in the world through exhibitions, audience response, reviews and publications etc., rather than the

commentary being limited exclusively to the artist's potentially solipsistic perspective, which could jeopardise the credibility and significance of the research. Whilst largely agreeing with Bolt, I still believe a subjective position is relevant, to situate oneself in the field of inquiry, but in order for this to be valid for the research, a precise methodological scaffold is required in order to maintain academic cogency. This is one of the reasons for the extensive reading behind the *why* and *how* in this section.

Christopher Frayling, in his provocative thesis *Research in Art & Design* (1993), draws attention to the various debates around what research means in the realm of art and design. He discusses what constitutes serious research (consider images of people in lab coats doing cryptic experiments with test tubes, or studious readers hunched over mountains of books in a library) and how artists can often be wary of engaging in such activity (imagine the lone, temperamental artist in their studio harnessing their deepest passions and obsessions to create their great masterpieces). He attempts to define how and where the work of an artist constitutes research and how an artwork might embody knowledge. Influenced by his reading of Herbert Read, Frayling identifies three research models applicable to art and design that develop out of how artists naturally approach practice – research *into* art and design, research *through* art and design and research *for* art and design. However, he is very much aware that these models are starting points for further debates on the subject.

Much has been written around the issue of artist research since Frayling's essay, with many thinkers celebrating the uniqueness of such an approach. I agree with Henk Slager when, in *The Pleasure of Research* (2015), he writes that artistic research operates within a rhizomatic model of thought. He notes that artistic research exists in the place of the in-

between, that is, the space 'between archiving knowledge production and active artistic thought' (Slager, 2015, p. 83). Artistic research has the 'capacity and willingness to continuously engage in novel, unexpected epistemological relations in a methodological process of interconnectivity' (Slager, 2015, p. 76). This makes it distinctive from what he describes as the arborescent and 'sedentary conceptions of knowledge' that is academic science (Slager, 2015, p. 43).

Like Slager, I would argue that artistic research has the potential for creating a 'space for artistic processes of thought' (Slager, 2015, p. 43). Research is about uncertainty and it is only on completion of the artistic research project that we are able to verify if the trajectory of the 'operational process' has actually successfully generated 'novel methodological insights' (Slager, 2015, p. 38).

Along similar lines, Barrett (2010) proposes that artistic practice is the 'production of knowledge or philosophy in action' (Barrett, 2010, p. 1). Barrett situates creative arts-based research within alternative modes of logic and knowing applied through experiential and action-based learning (Barrett, 2010, p. 3). These alternative approaches favour subjective, emergent and interdisciplinary approaches, which have the potential, Barrett believes, to 'open up new ways of modelling meaning, knowledge and social relations' (Barrett, 2010, p. 3).

Equally defending and validating the distinctiveness of artistic research, in *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (2013), Robin Nelson argues that actions are knowledge producing (Nelson, 2013). This model suggests that practice may be the key method of inquiry and a substantial part of the submission (Nelson, 2013, pp. 8-9). It includes a rigorous investigation of the 'know-how', 'know-what' and

'know-that' of a project that maximises the potential of the knowledge to contribute to 'academic' research (Nelson, 2013, p. 20). Like Slager, he values artistic research as a model that 'affords arts practitioners the opportunity to undertake study at the highest level and to achieve the award of PhD without abandoning their practice for an entirely logocentric approach' (Nelson, 2013, p. 114).

Artwork or Artistic Inquiry

For Barrett (2014), artistic research crosses between the particular and private, general and public. I find this relevant in terms of how I operate as a practitioner-researcher, where the impulse to create work often comes from an internal reaction to an external catalyst. I would stress that the artistic research undertaken for the PhD is different from what I would describe as artwork. This is due to reading an *artwork* as an outcome that is either published, performed or exhibited, whereas artistic research is generated in order to question what an artwork reveals as it transitions from the private (the artist's internal world) to the public space.

In a research inquiry, art practice can be understood as alternative forms of data (Eisner, 1997). Throughout the PhD, I have used art practice as a device with which to articulate and visually transform a personal or private experience to have an impact in the public space. Bolt (2014) describes this as the *work* of art, that is, the '*movement* in concepts, understanding, methodologies, material practices, affect and sensorial experience that arise in and through the vehicle of art and the artwork' (Bolt, 2014, p. 30). Bolt puts forward a series of questions for the practitioner-researcher to ask of the work in its form as a 'material intervention' (Bolt, 2014, p. 27). These questions provide a useful framework within which to analyse and evaluate my artistic research:

- What was revealed through the work? What did it do?
- What new concepts emerged through the research?
- Do these new concepts shift understanding and practice in the field and/or in the other discursive fields?

(Bolt, 2014, p. 32)

Hybrid Practices: Multi-Mode/Method Approach

As explored above, the structure of many practice as/-led research models share similar characteristics. In Frayling's experience at the Royal College of Art, research *through* art and design is comparable to a degree by project. This is something very recognisable in art schools, where a specific inquiry question is set and then examined through studio work and submitted together with a research report. Frayling writes that for PhD-level submission research *through* practice includes studio work and a substantial research document (Frayling, 1993). This approach relates to Nelson's formulation of a research model with a focus on a multi-mode approach, for example, a submission that includes documentation of the inquiry, complementary writing, and a product – performance, video piece or exhibition (accompanied by an exhibition catalogue). The details of the practice can be evidenced using MP3 files, MOV files, sketchbooks, journals and photography (Nelson, 2013, p. 26). The various examples of multi-modal submission outlined here have influenced how I submitted the artistic inquiry. Together with hard copies of the written thesis, a data card is included containing documentation of the artistic research.[3]

As an alternative to an exhibition model, Gray and Malins suggest the practice submission can be in the form of an exposition (Gray & Malins, 2004). The content of such a submission

[3] It includes video, photography, performance, an exhibition and symposium in the form of MOV, MP4, JPEG and PDF files.

generally includes stages of the research process, the thinking, and the failures. The significant points of the complementary writing part of the submission can include a review of practitioners working within similar terrain, a conceptual framework and an account of the process. Gray and Malins (2004) also support the use of bricolage within art and design research, as this approach 'suggests that methodology is derived from, and responds to, practice and context, and the use of "tools", "collage", "construction", "reflection" and "interpretation" are completely familiar to us as practitioners' (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 74).

The subjective, emergent and interdisciplinary approach is further examined by Brad Haseman in the essay 'Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm' (2010). Haseman examines how practice-led researchers operate by applying a multi-method approach led by the practice itself. Along with an overview of qualitative (multi-method using non-numerical data) and quantitative (scientific method using numbers and graphics) research paradigms, Haseman identifies the uniqueness of practitioner-researcher modes of identity as 'performative research', that is, research 'expressed in non-numerical data, but in forms of symbolic data other than words in discursive text. These include material forms of practice, of still and moving images, of music and sound, of live action and digital code' (Haseman, 2010, p. 151).

I would assert that multi-method approaches to the practice emerge through the actual making of the artwork. I am very much aware that my practice and writing are informed by the combination of a series of disciplines, be that political theory, sociology, anthropology, ethnography, geographical studies or visual culture. My approach can be interpreted as a form of bricolage that acts as a powerful tool by which to create an understanding of the external world. This is highlighted by Nelson, who proposes that artistic research can be

interdisciplinary and draws upon a range of sources in several fields. He stresses, however, that although it is not possible for students to be specialists in all disciplines, it does not render the research lacking in thoughtfulness (Nelson, 2013, p. 33). This appropriating from other disciplines is evidenced in my treatment of autoethnography as a method for analysing the research inquiry.

Aesthetic Autoethnography[4]

> In writing about identity, our communicative act always embody projections of ourselves, even if these are carried at a subconscious level and that self always says something about one's relationship to the culture it describes. (Freeman, 2016, p. 148)

In *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts* (2005) Graeme Sullivan emphasises that as the artist is making themselves both the 'researcher and the object of the study' (Sullivan, 2005, p. 79), there needs to be rigorous attention paid not only to giving a critique of the work but also to how the generated knowledge and understanding can be acted upon (Sullivan, 2005, p. 80). The artwork produced should be grounded in evidence 'that justifies the questions raised and supports the claims made' (Sullivan, 2005, p. 80). Sullivan observes that art making is a construction site and that the artists themselves can be the subject of a case study (Sullivan, 2005, p. 79). Other writers in the field share this way of thinking. In *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1991), Schön observes that practitioners reflect on their knowing-in-practice (Schön, 1991, p. 61)**.** One of the necessities of being reflective is to flip between the role of practitioner and a reflective researcher (Schön, 1991, p. 324).

[4] This term is used by Lucas Ihlein (2014) in *Blogging as Art, Art as Research* in Bolt, 2014, p. 47.

When a practitioner reflects in and on their practice, they may reflect on the tacit norms and appreciations that underlie a judgement, or on the strategies and theories implicit in a pattern of behaviour. They may reflect on the feeling for a situation, which has led to the adoption of a particular course of action, on the way in which they have framed the problem to solve, or on the role they have constructed for themselves within a larger institutional context (Schön, 1991, p. 62).

Gray and Malins understand the practitioner-researcher role as one of an 'insider' who develops the inquiry from their own experience and knowledge within their relevant subject (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 23). They write:

> In the role of 'practitioner-researcher', subjectivity, involvement, reflexivity is acknowledged; the interaction of the researcher with the research material is recognized. Knowledge is negotiated – inter-subjective, context bound, and is a result of personal construction. Research material may not necessarily be replicated, but can be made accessible, communicated and understood. (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 21)

In this study I call into question the connections between and complexities of identity, territory and language. Developing this model of the practitioner-researcher as insider, exploration from one's own experiences can be a useful device by which to instigate an inquiry. Now growing in popularity in various fields such as business, nursing and the social sciences, autoethnography was originally used as a method by ethnographers to situate themselves within their studies (Heider, 1975; Hayano, 1979). As part of a qualitative research toolbox, it involves creative forms of writing that aim to reveal connections between identity, history, culture, society, power and politics. In *Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography* (2011), performance artist Tami Spry defines autoethnography as a critical reflexive methodology (Spry, 2011, p. 12). Spry observes that

autoethnography connects others to us within social and cultural contexts (Spry, 2011). Likewise, I see autoethnography as a valuable tool for drawing out data from the narratives that are embedded in the objects I make. The artwork and the writing are used as a means to problematise and reveal my perspective on identity and its relationship to territory.

One of the criticisms of autoethnography is that being one's own participant could be perceived as too subjective or self-centred. In her book *Autoethnography as Method* (2016) Heewon Chang aims to transcend the self through critical analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2016, p. 43). I believe that the self constantly appears through the art practice and the writing. It is here where I expose my understanding, prejudice, belief systems. The disclosing of one's thoughts through the art practice and the writing is from a position of vulnerability. The artwork is part of a personal narrative questioning how my social, national and cultural identities are related to my geographical location, within which I act out and dramatise my position. I understand art practice as a method by which I attempt to understand the world, shuttling between the personal and the political. Like Bolt and Barrett, I argue that an artwork as a subjective, non-empirical form of research can bring into view and challenge political, cultural and social constructs. For this reason, I consider elements of autoethnography to be an important investigative model in critically questioning my view of identity, territory and language through art practice.

On Writing – Theorising Out of Practice

At this point I want to further investigate the process of writing within a research *through* practice model. Nelson (2013) stresses that as well as being a substantial part of the submission, the practice is articulated, supported and evidenced by the writing. Bolt further articulates the importance of the writing as not simply to describe and contextualise the

practice, but as about producing 'movement in thought itself' (Bolt, 2010, p. 33), where practice plays a significant role. Bolt observes that 'these movements cannot be gained by contemplative knowledge alone' (Bolt, 2010, p. 33). The writing supplies the vehicle through which the artwork discovers a discursive form and reconfigures theoretical positions (Bolt, 2010, p. 33). Writing becomes part of the act of revealing. It is part of the process by which practice becomes theory making (Bolt, 2010). Stephen Goddard supports this position by stating that reflective writing 'contextualises the methodologies and significant contributions of the research' (Goddard, 2010, p. 113). Both work in parallel as a contribution to new knowledge (Goddard, 2010, p. 113). I agree with Goddard that the writing and practice aim to generate new knowledge whilst remaining emergent and malleable, and where the researcher adopts a reflective practitioner role (Goddard, 2010, p. 116).

Following the proposal put forward by Bolt, in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (2010), Estelle Barrett recommends a suitable structure for practice research that maps the practice through an exegesis (the written account by which the researcher explains or interprets the artistic work) that covers research methodologies, materials, methods and assumptions, literature and practice review, a conceptual/theoretical framework, discussion of the studio research practice, and discussion of outcomes and significance. Nelson (2013) understands what he calls the complementary writing element of the submission as assisting in the '*articulation and evidencing of the research inquiry*' (Nelson, 2013, p. 36). I would agree that both approaches lead to a full integration of 'theory and practice in the articulation and dissemination of its findings' (Nelson, 2013, p. 80).

Elkins, in his essay 'The Three Configurations of Studio-Art PhDs' (2009), identifies three models of writing that include:

1. the writing as research informs the art practice,
2. the writing can be equal to the artwork, or
3. the writing is the artwork and vice versa.

He observes that the first model is the most common in practice-based PhDs. The remaining two are less frequently applied, but still effective models. For me, the first of these models resonates most with my proposed approach to writing.

In relation to this, Victor Burgin, in his essay 'Thoughts on "Research" Degrees in Visual Arts Departments' (2009), identifies three types of PhD visual practitioner candidates. I found Burgin's essay to be frank in terms of its critical standpoint regarding what type of practitioners would benefit from progressing onto a PhD. His assessment included the graduate with a good degree qualification who is an accomplished artist and has the ability to write a long dissertation. The second is one who is interested in writing a long dissertation but has limited experience in a specialist practice. The third is a candidate who both creates artwork and is an enthusiastic reader (Burgin, 2009, p. 79). In Burgin's experience, this 'third type' of candidate is the most common. These are artists who 'turn concepts encountered in reading into practical projects' (Burgin, 2009, p. 74) and whose submission is typically defined by a greater focus on the practical outcomes whilst producing academic writing that is treated as secondary to the practice (Burgin, 2009, p. 74).

My own adaptation of Burgin's approach to the PhD in the arts is based on a model where the emphasis is on both the practice and the writing, and also incorporates, being honest about this, much of the approach of the third type of candidate, who oscillates between the

readings and practical outcomes (Burgin, 2009, p. 74). I do not see the writing as secondary to the practice, as I agree with Elkins that the writing can support, modify, guide or enable the art practice (Elkins, 2009, p. 147). This is how I approach the writing, which I see as part of the process of the artwork's conception, informing the art practice and assisting in making artworks that are more persuasive. My writing encompasses art history, art theory, philosophy and art criticism and includes investigations into disciplines outside that of art and design, such as anthropology, geography and politics. These expanded readings have influenced the approach and direction of the art practice (Elkins, 2009). In addition to this, the written submission also includes technical accounts that describe the processes of making the artworks.

Orientating the Practice

So far, I have given an account of the various models of artistic research and the various positions taken up by writers in the field. The literature has been discussed in order to define and justify the application of a research *through* art model. To make concrete the practitioner-researcher assertion, I will now analyse the use of specific methods related to my art practice, which include performance art, video, photography, text, site-specific interventions, and relational and dialogical practices. It is important to stress that my reading of writers such as Claire Bishop, Nicolas Bourriaud, Pablo Helguera, Grant Kester, Peter Osborne, Rosalind Krauss, Anna Dezeuze, Nato Thompson, Jen Harvie and Shannan Jackson have been significant in defining these approaches to making artworks.

Situating the Practice in an Historical and Methodological Framework

> Today every medium represents only one possibility among many. The only thing that counts is the artist's conceptual project. The choice of a particular medium only has meaning inasmuch as it relates to a strategic gain within the overall project. If a

> conceptual statement can be adequately formulated in terms of painting, then the artist paints, but if a different medium proves to be more useful, they turn to video, or build installations. In this context anybody who looks at the medium alone is missing the most important thing. (Verwoert, 2005, p. 7)

Due to the nature of my practice, which departs from the traditional idea of medium specificity (Krauss, 2009; Dezeuze 2017; Osborne, 2013), I situate the work within a post-medium condition (Krauss), and it is historically positioned within a post-conceptual context (Osborne, Dezeuze). The term 'post-medium' refers to Rosalind Krauss' criticism of Clement Greenberg's high modernist theory that espoused that the essence of a given medium lay in its own particular properties. Krauss was aware of how artists rejected this supposedly reductive explanation and strove to articulate these concerns through theoretical propositions which originated in *A Voyage on The North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, published in 1999 and further critiqued in *The Guarantee of the Medium* (2009) and *Under Blue Cup* (2011). Krauss cites the conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth's declaration that to be an artist is to question the nature of art, moving from a position of the specific (such as accepting the nature of painting) towards that of the general (*what* art *is*) (Kosuth, 1993). Krauss defines the term *technical support* as a replacement for traditional, outmoded mediums of oil and canvas, plaster on armature, carving on stone block (Krauss, 2009, p. 142). An artwork's *technical support* is often adopted from commercial genres, for examples Ed Ruscha's use of the car as the underlying medium of his series *26 Gasoline Stations* (1963) and *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), Sophie Calle's use of investigative journalism in work such as *The Address Book* (1983) and Christian Marclay's technique of sound synchronisation in *Video Quartet* (2002). The *technical support* that the artist uses is a framework that generates its own specific rules through a process of *figuring forth* (Krauss, 2009, p. 142). Seeking out the most efficient visual carrier

in which to communicate the idea has become more important than medium specificity. This application of what Krauss describes as technical support from more commercial, external devices is a significant methodology in my practice. Flags, banners, signage, interview techniques, fieldwork and boundary markers are adopted in order to *figure forth* the political, social and cultural issues being questioned within the work via artistic inquiry.

By positioning my practice in reference to Krauss' post-medium condition, I also situate it historically within the postconceptual. Peter Osborne, in his book *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (2013), makes the speculative proposal that contemporary art is post-conceptual art (Osborne, 2013). I find the term 'postconceptual' useful in positioning my art practice within an historical and cultural timeframe. Osborne situates the post-conceptual in terms of the break, during the 1960s, away from the dominance of Clement Greenberg's high modernism, object-based and medium-specific model towards the introduction of anti-Greenbergian ways of working instigated by minimalism, conceptual art and performance (Osborne, 2013, p. 19). In this way, Osborne is proposing an alternative periodisation of art after Greenberg's high modernism, which, rather than the modernist-postmodernist model, gives dominance to 'formalist modernism, conceptual art, postconceptual art' and 'treats the conceptual – postconceptual trajectory as the standpoint from which to totalize the wide array of other anti-formalist movements' (Osborne, 2013, p. 48).

At this point I want to highlight the significance of the postconceptual and post-medium characteristic of precariousness, which is important to how I make art and how it operates in the world. Using the term 'precarious' to describe the types of art practices emerging at the turn of the millennium, as exemplified in the works of Gabriel Orozco, Francis Alÿs and

Thomas Hirschhorn. Anna Dezeuze (2017) historically maps the development of this form of art practice through the emergence of the counter culture in the 1960s to the tactical interventions into global capitalism of the 1990s. Often approached at the level of the human scale, Dezeuze describes these practices as un-monumental, unspectacular, relative, immanent, everyday, elusive, transient, straddling the border between the imminent and transcendental, the fragment and the system, the instant rather than the eternity (Dezeuze, 2017, p. 292)**.**

Influenced by these readings of the postconceptual and post-medium (*technical support* and *figure forth*), my practice involves opening a dialogue between the function of the ideas and the vehicle by which they are transmitted. I situate myself in the more mobile and temporary, fluid and *light* forms of art practice, for example, performance, flags, video and posters, constructing forms of encounter and resistance that puncture reality and allow for the materialisation of alternative ways of visualising spaces of contention.

Positioning

I adopt a research *through* art practice model as it is most applicable to the way I approach the research inquiry. I see the making of artworks as a method for understanding the world (Scrivener, 2011); thus, for my inquiry, I believe that research *through* art practice is an appropriate means to assist in bringing forth new ways of visualising territoriality and identity.

The intention is not to examine the practice for the sake of itself, hence the decision to explore the inquiry *through* art. I am interested in how art operates as an opening, a channel to consider alternative ways of thinking and visualising, interpreting and

understanding the world. In this instance, I am proposing that the art practice is a method by which to enable thought.

By situating myself within a research *through* art practice model of inquiry, I am asking myself to set aside my role as the Artist with an emphasis on making Art, and to see myself as a practitioner-researcher who has insider knowledge of particular methods through which to conduct the inquiry. These methods are interrogated for their suitability and rigour through maintained analysis and evaluation. The deepening of knowledge is primarily gained by undertaking *specific experiential propositions,* which for this thesis I call *artistic inquiry*. Influenced by my reading of Barrett (2014), who defines artistic research as 'acting not only as a mode or process of enquiry, but also as a mode of knowing in action and knowledge transfer' (Barrett, 2014, p. 6), my thesis is inquiry-driven, with a desire to investigate, experiment, argue, uncover, unpack and elaborate. The *artistic inquiry* acts to physically initiate the critical investigation.

Heterotopic Friction

Previously, when asked to describe my method of art practice, I often used the words absurd, provocative or challenging to describe my actions. This helped me to distance the work from being interpreted as either overtly aggressive, negative or partisan. When trying to find a definitive term by which to frame the practice, I had initially considered labels such as *soft antagonism*, *soft agonism* and *relational soft conflict*. However, none of these captured the true nature of what the art practice was doing, particularly with regard to my approach to investigating identity, territory and language. I finally arrived at the term 'heterotopic friction', which I felt to be a fitting description of how my practice operated

within public spaces. Not only did it encapsulate the approach used in my art practice, but also had the potential, as a method, to be applied in other disciplines.

The root of applying the term 'heterotopic' resided in its medical usage for describing tissue or bone occurring in abnormal places or being grafted on. I used the word 'friction' as a way to distance myself from the *hard* antagonistic domain of activist art practices, which, as Chantal Mouffe observes, is problematic as their position is that of aggressor, seeing any opposition as an enemy to bring down.

My thinking around this term has been heavily influenced by Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia and the writings of Mouffe, in particular her theories of *agonistic politics* and *critical art practices*. By means of a reading of Mouffe and Foucault, I situate heterotopic friction in the framework of art practice, meaning an extension and reinterpretation of the political framing of agonism and heterotopic space towards a type of art practice that identifies its limits and potential for change to occur. Together with an analysis of Mouffe's and Foucault's theories, the term 'heterotopic friction' was also influenced by a critical reading of art theory (Bishop, 2004; Helguera, 2011; Harvie, 2013), political theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Roberts, 2015; Rockhill, 2014), and heterotopia in theatre studies, politics and spaces of crisis (Faramelli, 2020; Tompkins, 2014; White, 2020).

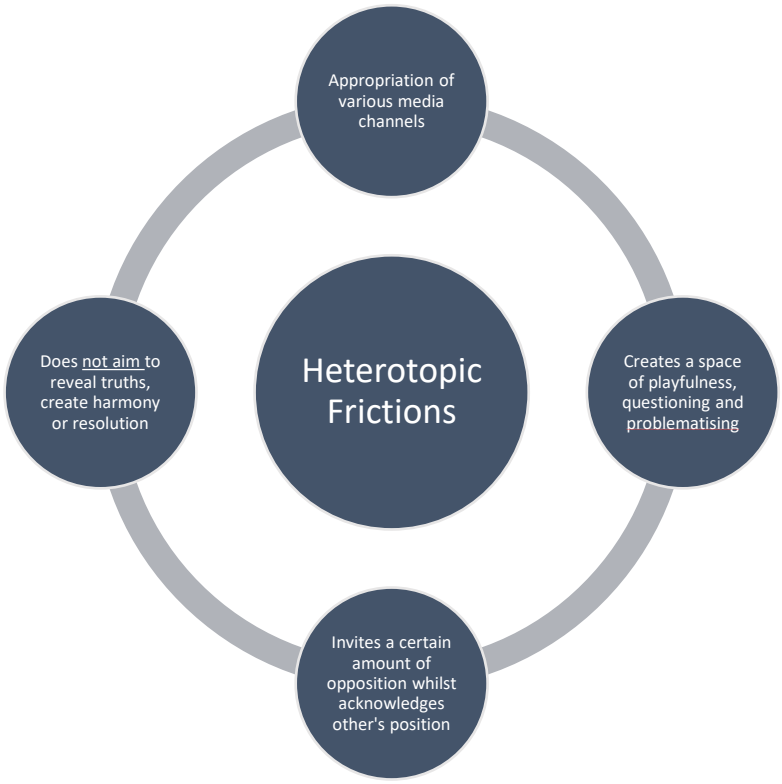

Figure 1: Characteristics of Heterotopic Frictions

Figure 1 gives an overview of the four characteristics of heterotopic friction as I propose it. The first characteristic includes creating a space of playfulness, questioning and problematising. The second is concerned with oppositions and acknowledging alternative positions in a space of pluralism. The third characteristic defines what heterotopic friction does not do, for example, aiming to reveal a 'truth' or to work towards developing a sense of harmony or resolve. The fourth characteristic defines the material qualities of artworks that include re-purposing existing media available to both dominant and counter-hegemonic agencies. In the following sections, I consider how these characteristics have been arrived at and how they operate in practice.

For Foucault, we live in an age of juxtapositions and dispersions, nearness and farness, where coexistence dominates. Foucault sees the world as a network, a series of connections and intersections. He is fascinated by sites that, although they have a relationship to other sites, deactivate or overturn those which they attempt to emulate. These types of sites include utopias and heterotopias.

Foucault reads utopias as 'sites with no real place' (Foucault, 1986, p. 24), an unreal space whose goal is to present society either in its most perfect or most flawed form. Real places, that is, those places that do exist, perform like authorised utopias, in which all actual sites found within culture are concurrently embodied and challenged. Foucault defines the heterotopia as being an 'effectively enacted utopia' that functions to 'represent, contest and invert' the utopia, whether in its perfect or imperfect conception (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). In contrast to utopias, heterotopias are outside of all places, but can be denoted in actual locations (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). It was Foucault's belief that between the utopia and the heterotopia there existed a 'sort of mixed, joint experience' (Foucault, 1986, p. 24).

Foucault's concept of heterotopology consists of six principles, which I will briefly summarise here and explore in practice in the following chapters. The first principle is that although no one universal form of heterotopia exists, no culture fails to establish a heterotopia (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). All periods of history have somehow located places hierarchically by declaring them either sacred, private or social (Foucault, 1986). An example of this is found in what Foucault classifies as 'primitive societies', where there exist *crisis heterotopias.* Such sites are consecrated places and only accessed by individuals who are in a state of crisis. These are sites in which 'individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation

to the required mean or norm are placed' (Foucault, 1986, p. 25). The second principle is that the function of a heterotopia simultaneously changes in response to societal and historical shifts. These changes are fashioned by the society itself (Foucault, 1986, p. 25). The third principle of heterotopia allows several incompatible spaces to exist in one real place. Heterotopias are associated with segments of time, and this forms the fourth principle whereby a heterotopia is associated with heterochronies (Foucault, 1986, p. 26). As well as being a distributive operation between elements spread out in space, time is activated when a society breaks away from what was considered real time (Foucault, 1986, p. 26). The fifth principle permits the heterotopia to be open and closed. As a rule, the heterotopia is not accessible to a public. It is only accessible by those who have a right to be there. Permission must be granted. When a heterotopia appears open, we are still excluded. Interestingly, this breaking of 'real' time and accessibility are like the theatrical spaces of performance. The final principle operates between poles. By functioning in relation to all other spaces, the heterotopia either exposes real space as illusionary or creates a real space that is perfected and orderly, in contrast to that of our own, that can be experienced as 'messy, ill constructed, and jumbled' (Foucault, 1986, p. 27).

I propose to extend the reading of heterotopias to counter-sites of friction. Foucault outlines heterotopia as contrasting with the concept of the unreal space of the utopia and this is because, as Hancock, Faramelli & White write in *Spaces of Crisis and Critique: Heterotopias Beyond Foucault* (2020), 'utopias are more like thought-experiments, fantasies, and fictions' (Hancock, Faramelli, & White, 2020, p. 7). Heterotopia, on the other hand, is not concerned with imagining a future, but is situated inside and outside of reality (Hancock, Faramelli, & White, 2020, p. 7). It is a 'sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live' (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). When describing the

principles of heterotopia, Foucault implies that its function is to 'create a space of illusion that exposes every real space' (Foucault, 1986, p. 27). They are 'primarily a space from the outside which punctuates the artifice of the inside, that is, the putative "real" space' (White, 2020, p. 97).

In *the Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia & Social Ordering* (1997), Kevin Hetherington expands Foucault's concept of heterotopia to claim that modernity originated through an interplay between utopia and heterotopic spatial practice. He defines heterotopia as 'a space of alternate ordering' (Hetherington, 1997, p. viii), which marks it out as different. In Hetherington's reading, heterotopias exist in the space-between, they are a space where practices and ideas can be represented, a site that reveals the social ordering as a process rather than a concrete actuality (Hetherington, 1997, p. ix). They are spaces concerned with resistance, transgression, representation and paradox. Hetherington situates heterotopias as 'relational rather than ontological' and by this, he sees them as 'not specifically about forms of difference in themselves, but the relationship between that difference and alternative modes of social ordering' (Hetherington, 1997, p. 141). Ordering emerges from 'uncertain and ambivalent space and the social encounters and practices that developed there' (Hetherington, 1997, p. 143). Thus, social ordering is shaped by 'heterotopic uncertainty in which order and disorder are intermingled in a utopic practice of deferral set up between ideas about freedom and control' (Hetherington, 1997, p. 54). He describes spaces in relation to other spaces as representing 'modes of alternative social ordering that have come to be taken as some of the conditions of modernity' (Hetherington, 1997, p. 139).

Hetherington puts forward the argument that heterotopias appear when the ideals of utopia 'emerge from forms of difference which offer alternative ideas about the organization of society' (Hetherington, 1997, p. 54). This leads me to propose that heterotopias exist in friction with utopias. The heterotopia 'comes into existence when utopian ideals emerge in spatial play and are expressed as forms of difference which offer alternative ideas about the organization of society' (Hetherington, 1997, p. 142). This reading of utopia is one of a desire to order that which is not ordered in itself. Utopias strive for the impossible, which is social order. Such a desire brings about both intentional and unintentional effects. Heterotopias offer an alternative ordering, with an awareness of being in tension with utopia. They act as counter-hegemonic spaces that have a significant impact on how readings of society and power are shaped and contested (Hetherington, 1997, p. 21).

Heterotopic Friction: Theoretical Perspectives – Agonistics

Deriving from the Greek for 'opponent', antagonism occurs as a form of opposition or resistance. Read in this way, it is through aggression that an enemy is to be fought and brought to submission. In their 1985 publication *Hegemony and Social Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2014), Laclau and Mouffe question what an antagonistic relationship is and 'what kind of relation to objects […] it suppose[s]' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 108). Laclau and Mouffe observe that there can be many antagonisms opposing each other in the social, as antagonism does not inevitably appear from a single point (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 117). Struggle and discord are the reality of the social, even though the ideal of harmony is strived for. When the social becomes unstable, it is more likely that multiple antagonisms will surface. These forms of antagonism are the articulation

of opposition to 'commodification, bureaucratization, and increasing homogenization of social life itself' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 148).

In *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, Mouffe (2013) distinguishes between *antagonism*, the struggle between enemies, and the *agonistic*, the struggle between adversaries – 'the opponent with whom one shares a common allegiance to the democratic principles of "liberty and equality for all", while disagreeing about their interpretation' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7). Opposing the hostility and warlike resistance of antagonism, agonism, from the Greek *agon* ('struggle') is understood as both sides acknowledging the validity of the other's position. Agonism, as a political theory, places importance on the adversarial aspect of friction. It is where there is a respect for one's opponent and an understanding that frictions are an enduring aspect of a successful democracy. There is still a *them* and *us* demarcation, but through a recognition of pluralism (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7).

Far from being neutral, Mouffe's agonistic struggle is 'between opposing hegemonic projects which can never be reconciled rationally' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 3). To put it another way, Mouffe's version of the agonistic recognises the frictions inherent in society and the unattainableness of a definitive harmonious consensus. However, Mouffe points out that in an agonistic approach to politics, antagonisms are always present. In her writings, Mouffe campaigns for an art practice that demonstrates an aesthetic resistance informed by hegemonic approaches (Mouffe, 2013, p. 94). This includes practices that have a leaning towards a 'plurality of forms of artistic intervention' that take place in a 'multiplicity of sites' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 94). These sites can include both the institutional and public. Mouffe writes that art's 'critical dimension consists in making visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 93); thus, it acts as a vehicle for giving a voice to those enmeshed in and marked by the structures of the dominant power.

The central position that antagonism plays in Laclau and Mouffe's thesis is that it prevents any prospect of a compromise or resolution (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. xvii). Developing this proposition, in *Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces* (2007) Mouffe describes antagonism as exposing the 'limits of any rational consensus' (Mouffe, 2007, p. 2). It resides at the point where no logical resolution can be found. This resistance to solutions can be found in Mouffe's writings on art, where she questions how art practice can 'contribute to unsettling the dominant hegemony' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 91). Her proposal of a critical art practice does not aim to expose a fabricated reality to reveal something more authentic or real (Mouffe, 2013, p. 93).

Within spaces live multiple heterogeneous frames of utterances. The traditional idea of public space is where a consensus is arrived at, but Mouffe proposes that an agonistic approach to space is one where opposing attitudes are met with the awareness that there will be no attempt to create unity. Critical artistic practice, as Mouffe defines it, can be interpreted as 'counter-hegemonic interventions' that assist in constructing a 'multiplicity of sites' whereby there can be an analytical interrogation of dominant hegemony (Mouffe, 2013, p. 104). I read 'multiplicity of sites' as connecting with how Joanne Tompkins, in *Theatre's Heterotopias: Performance and the Cultural Politics of Space* (2014), defines heterotopias as fault lines and disruptions. Her argument proposes that these can potentially rethink social space (Tompkins, 2014, p. 69). Therefore, the heterotopia presents an alternative reading or ordering of space and place.

For Mouffe, by playing a part in disrupting dominant hegemonies, artists prove that art is still crucial to society and has a significant role to play in the political sphere. Taking as an example the art practice of Alfredo Jaar, Mouffe interprets the artist's role as intervening in

layers of site, creating a series of counter-hegemonic exchanges that target how dominant hegemony is constructed. The artist adopts a strategy of dis-articulating 'the existing "common sense" and fostering a variety of agonistic public spaces that contribute to the development of a counter-hegemony' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 95). In this way, the public is given triggers designed to allow it to interrogate previously accepted belief systems. This could then promote the possibility of a desire for change.

Likewise, when describing critical artistic practice, Anthony Downey, in his book *Art and Politics Now* (2014), questions how art practice engages with social and political realms. Downey believes that art practice can 'open up a space in which to imagine and give form to that which politics deems unimaginable or beyond the bounds of public discussion and debate' (Downey, 2014, p. 18). Likewise, in *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (2013), Jen Harvie observes that politically engaged art and performance practices 'test boundaries between public and private space. They often make visible the unremarked private control of space by apparently provoking that control to assert itself' (Harvie, 2013, p. 109). For Harvie, these types of practices elicit interrogations into 'social equality, social mobility and society itself' (Harvie, 2013, p. 109).

Artistic counter-hegemonic exchanges are also emphasised by Gabriel Rockhill in his publication *Radical Histories and Politics of Art* (2014). He contends that art practice is politicised through an encounter with the social, defined as the realms of creation/production, circulation/distribution, and reception/interpretation. He observes that fiction can be an influential device capable of connecting with the 'real of reality in a world whose apparent reality might mask more than it reveals' (Rockhill, 2014, p. 183). Art can generate counter-histories, whose aim is to specifically undo the major national

narratives and reconfigure 'operative categories or assumptions' (Rockhill, 2014, p. 185), and it can act as a critical intervention, bringing alternative narratives into view (Rockhill, 2014, p. 185). A comparable analysis can be found in *Revolutionary Time and the Avant Garde* (2015) by John Roberts, who interprets the relationship between art and politics as operative, meaning that once art has encountered politics it is activated to create a 'set of relations, modes of cognition and learning and mapping, that provides a different space of encounter between praxis, critique and truth' (Roberts, 2015, p. 35). For Roberts, there are three central modes of negotiation between art praxis and political praxis. The first mode, which my own practice has investigated to a degree, is concerned with tactical media incursions that use art activism and digital practices and is dependent on the *continuity* between political processes and art-political activism (Roberts, 2015, p. 219). The second mode is a retreat from art and central politics through guerrilla tactics of anonymous interventions. In this mode, the artist or artist groups 'pursue the dissolution of the artist's identity and skills into non-artistic practices as the basis for art-led solutions to social problems' (Roberts, 2015, p. 219). The third mode comprises practices that operate at community and extra-institutional levels and situates art as social practice (Roberts, 2015, p. 219). However, all three modes, Roberts writes, add to the general *situatedness* of politics and art, but they are also problematic as they habitually propagate incorrect assumptions in that they value art too much or, in other cases, too little (Roberts, 2015, p. 220).

The problematics and assumptions regarding the value and traversing of politics and art is likewise examined by Mouffe, who distinguishes a critical art practice from what could be termed activist art. The issue with activist art is that it holds onto a false impression that it can independently eliminate neo-liberal powers. Activist art is problematic in that it believes change can only come about by the complete obliteration of existing hegemony. Mouffe

observes that this type of activist art approach is vulnerable to and is easily subsumed into the dominant hegemony, thus becoming part of its strategies to maintain its control. Mouffe is suspicious of the idea that the more transgressive the practice, the more radical it is (Mouffe, 2013, p. 104). Often these transgressive acts are skilfully reclaimed by the media and subsumed by the machine of capitalism to be reprocessed and redistributed as entertainment. With a viewpoint comparable to Mouffe's, Downey observes that the destination of an art practice that operates in the political sphere is different to that of activism, with its clear-cut goals. In fact, art does not necessarily have any definitive outcomes. In this way, art practices that are engaged in the political realm have the potential to expand 'the very notion of activism, protest, and political participation' (Downey, 2014, p. 14).

Relational Agitation and Antagonism

In this section, I want to expand the discussion to include two further key influences in my reading of art practices and politics. In her essay 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' (2004), Claire Bishop proposes that rather than producing art adhering to a 'utopian' and convivial outcome, as she believes is promoted by Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* (2001), a more disruptive and discordant art is required. On Bishop's reading, Bourriaud's definition of relational aesthetics is one of promoting a feel-good factor, one that is unifying and aimed at creating harmony within a community. Her critical attack includes 'relational' art practices that emphasise the spectacle, the feel-good factor and the celebratory over the political. Bishop's relational antagonism, on the other hand, aims to 'expose that which is repressed in sustaining the semblance of […] harmony' (Bishop, 2004, p. 79). Bishop believes this approach would produce 'concrete and polemical grounds for rethinking our relationship to the world and one another' (Bishop, 2004, p. 79).

What Bishop petitions for is deeper thinking about the complexities of how the 'relational' develops a greater social consciousness. The questions that Bishop tries to grapple with are what types of relations are being fashioned and for whom (Schneider & Wright, 2013, p. 117). Bishop believes that antagonism arises in a social context at the 'limits of society's ability to fully constitute itself' (Bishop, 2004, p. 67). Informed by the work of Laclau and Mouffe, Bishop's antagonism exists in 'a democratic society' in which 'relations of conflicts are *sustained*, not erased' (Bishop, 2004, p. 66). For Bishop, antagonism exists at the margins of society's capacity to fully define itself (Bishop, 2004, p. 67) – in other words, where a person is neither completely *decentred* nor completely *unified.*

Rather than pleasure and consensus, relational antagonism produces feelings of awkwardness and '*sustains* a tension amongst viewers, participants, and context' (Bishop, 2004, p. 70). In other words, artworks that present a sense of unease, discomfort or frustration as well as absurdity or contradiction can 'explore and disentangle a more complex knot of social concerns about political engagement, affect, inequality, narcissism, class, and behavioural protocols' (Bishop, 2012, p. 39). What Bishop is proposing is that artworks act as effective devices that have the capacity to ignite imagination. This can be achieved through multiple methods. When considered in terms of participatory arts, these can be realised either through an affirmative model, where an alternative utopia can be worked towards, or through oblique models, what Bishop calls negation of negation. This model encourages an amplifying of estrangement and hostility (Bishop, 2011, p. 2).

Related to this, Helguera proposes that antagonistic art is more intense than other forms of practice (Helguera, 2011, p. 59). The role of confrontation, he suggests, is about taking a position of criticality on an issue but not with the intention of offering a solution as 'its

greatest strength is in raising questions, not providing answers' (Helguera, 2011, p. 59). However, Helguera believes there is a danger of alienating the audience when an excessively confrontational approach is used to highlight less combative issues. There must be a 'balance between means and ends' in the handling of an artwork and the issue (Helguera, 2011, p. 65). A confrontational approach must be seen in response to the time and place in which it occurs (Helguera, 2011, p. 65). The antagonistic act operates in a context where it is either able to provoke enough to mobilise dialogue successfully or falls short of its call to action and becomes pointless or alienating in an invalid way (Helguera, 2011, p. 65). Even though, as he points out, many socially engaged artworks are politically driven, some of this practice is directed towards simply engaging audiences in experiences they are unfamiliar with (Helguera, 2011, p. 68). Helguera is particularly critical of this approach as they could be perceived as being more to do with entertainment rather than questioning the political or the social (Helguera, 2011, p. 68).

Equally, in her paper, 'Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?' (2011), Bishop calls for an art that is recognised as an experimental endeavour that intersects with the world. In this way, art can inform and reinforce politically motivated missions without taking full accountability for the conceiving and realisation of a given project. Even through the process of disruption, the final aim of artistic practice is not political conversion. It is Bishop's belief that art's affiliation to the social is that it decides either to become morally supportive to the dominant hegemony, or to give emphasis to autonomy, lending its power to counter-hegemonic struggles (Bishop, 2011, p. 4). Art, in this form, can be seen to operate as something that destabilises established systems of value and creates a 'new language with which to represent and question social contradiction' (Bishop, 2011, p. 4).

Contesting Artistic Practice

During the writing of this thesis, there has been a growing number of essays published and recent PhD completions with a focus on Mouffe's theory of agonistic politics and how this is present in socially engaged art practices. An example of this can be found in Antoinette Elizabeth Burchill's *Exploring Agonism with Mischief: Participatory Performance in the Public Realm* (2018). In her thesis, Burchill questions when artworks are or are not agonistic, the outcome of which is the development of criteria for this activation to be judged against (Burchill, 2018). Likewise, in his essay 'The Political Dimension of Dance: Mouffe's Theory of Agonism and Choreography' (2017), Goran Petrović Lotina applies Mouffe's theory of agonism to artistic practice. Lotina uses dance as an example of how an art form can contribute to the contesting of dominant hegemony and be considered a model that can be transformative in regard to society and in defence of democracy (Lotina, 2017, p. 252), applying the terms *agonistic encounter* and *agonistic objectification* as systems by which the 'articulation of partial and contesting systems of relations allowing for different realities to be materialised in the same space' (Lotina, 2017, p. 252). *Agonistic objectification* is described as a challenge to practices prescribed by the dominant hegemony that aim to sediment and objectify through 'repetition in a fixed and absolute totality' (Lotina, 2017, p. 262). Discussing a concept related to Mouffe's agonistic public spaces, Lotina describes an *agonistic encounter* as where diverse groups of people are drawn into the same experiential space (Lotina, 2017, p. 268). Interestingly, Lotina identifies that Mouffe does not differentiate art and politics as two separate spheres (Lotina, 2017, p. 259). Mouffe writes that 'there is an aesthetic dimension in the political and there is a political dimension in art' and that this is why 'it is not useful to make a distinction between political and non-political art' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 91). Lotina argues for a contesting art practice functioning in a space

for ‘agonistic debate’ (Lotina, 2017, p. 269). I am in agreement with Lotina that an artist is able to activate the political dimension of an artwork through the dialogue that follows its activation in the world and thus reveal latent antagonisms (Lotina, 2017, p. 269).

Towards a Manifesto of Heterotopic Frictions

Mouffe, Bishop and Helguera offer models of artistic practice that can engage critically in the public space. Helguera questions how artists operate antagonistically, either playfully or challengingly, without the audience rejecting or ridiculing such actions. Mouffe calls for a critically engaged art practice that operates in an agonistic mode, while Bishop, on the other hand, demands that artists become more aggressively antagonistic. Heterotopic friction not only oscillates between these poles but demarcates a realm in which it distances itself from being defined as artistically and politically too hostile or too passive.

Mouffe (2013) and Harvie (2013) see public space as where viewpoints are disputed. Heterotopic friction negotiates this space of the contested. This is similar to Hetherington’s observation that a ‘place does not mean the same thing for one group of social agents as it does for another’ (Hetherington, 1997, p. 20). He observes counter-hegemonic spaces as having significance for how readings of society and power are shaped and contested (Hetherington, 1997, p. 21). As in Mouffe’s proposal of agonism, Hetherington proposes that there is a ‘unity of difference’ to the social (Hetherington, 1997, p. 143). Thus, it appears that the only consensus is that there are different points of view. Heterotopic friction is aware that what is produced through its method functions as an opposing attitude. However, heterotopic friction does not see these opposing values or attitudes as that of the enemy, but engages in an adversarial encounter, fully conscious of multiple

perspectives to a given issue. The importance of acknowledging other positions is to diffuse any overly aggressive retaliation.

Heterotopic friction acknowledges ambivalence in terms of its willingness to operate within a space where opposing views are acknowledged. However, this is not to be read as a sign of non-commitment or as an inability to take sides. Rather, its position is propositional and speculative, by which novel ways of thinking and running in the world appear. This, in turn, can lead to fascinating insights, and an invitation to discuss the plurality of ways people construct their worlds. Hili Razinsky, in her book *Ambivalence: A Philosophical Exploration* (2017), writes that the 'concept of ambivalence is primarily explicable as consisting in the simultaneous holding of two opposing attitudes toward the same thing, such as the attitudes are held by the person as opposed' (Razinsky, 2017, p. 36). Her argument centres on understanding ambivalence as a more positive trait that can lead to creative compromises, rather than a negative one, as in the inability to take a side. The very term is evocative of in-betweens. In my case, the struggle between how my identity as Anglo-Welsh/Welsh can be constructed, questioned and performed is celebrated in an openness to a plurality of readings.

For me, the need to make artwork in order to think through issues and to acknowledge the plurality of answers to a question is a key aspect in how I consider my world view. I do not aim to arrive at a definite or concrete conclusion. In other words, in my practice I do not promote a narrative of certainty. I encourage plurality as a reaction to my artwork. Therefore, an attitude of heterotopic friction can be applied as a creative method of encounter that promotes a sense of openness when exposed to conflicting perspectives.

The works also personify a struggle in terms of the mobilising of emotions (Mouffe, 2019) and the opening up of a space that encourages a multiplicity of perspectives.

Foucault defines the space in which one lives as a set of relations that 'delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposed on one another' (Foucault, 1986, p. 23). Heterotopic friction is where sites make contact with one another. What I mean by this is that the imagined, agonistic site can be superimposed upon the real site, thus creating friction. Like all frictions, energies are transformed by the interacting surfaces. From my perspective, this conversion is through the instigation of a discourse. Put another way, friction creates wear and this I translate as an opening of an affective response to the encounter, leading to specific action (Mouffe, 2018, p. 76). In my own case, I evoke and reveal my personal understandings or misunderstandings of my relation to cultural identity, which in turn helps me to position my understanding of the relationship between my identity and place.

Heterotopic friction is an aesthetic form of resistance (Mouffe, 2013) played out not only in the realm of politics and power, but also in terms of how the world is perceived at a personal, individual level. Akin to Mouffe's critical art practice, it brings into focus those voices that are outside the mainstream. Heterotopic friction generates counter-sites of resistance. These counter-sites are where real sites are 'contested and inverted' (Foucault, 1986, p. 24).

There are factors of hostility and estrangement in my work, but confrontation is not used in the same way as Bishop proposes in relational antagonism. I see her proposal as too aggressive and too ethically questionable. Heterotopic friction does not aim to repel the audience or make the artwork overly hostile. Where it does share attitudes with relational

antagonism is in how it creates an awkwardness generated from the artwork's contexts and audience's reception.

Like Mouffe's critical art, heterotopic friction is not activist art. It does not claim to bring about change, eliminate any type of opposition or aim to instigate resolution. It does not aim to bring forth an absolute truth or say that what is created is more authentic than what already exists.

This proposition may sound frustrating. But as Rockhill and Roberts propose, one of the dangers of talking about art is to overstate its impact. Of course, once an artwork is brought into the social world it encounters politics and thereafter is politicised (Rockhill, 2014). I agree that an artwork can be used by external powers as part of a wider set of instruments to instigate change. Heterotopic friction is not persuaded by authoritative positions, as I am aware that there are many antagonisms, and artworks, struggling for attention in a public space. Some are more violently forced upon the audience than others, some are more positive in their intentions and impact, but all are seen as valid by their instigators.

This is reflected in Mouffe's 2018 book *For a Left Populism* where she writes that those involved in agonistic politics are aware that we exist within a world of multiple standpoints and value systems and that it is impossible for all of these to be adopted. Of course, democracy requires a certain amount of consensus; however, there is also a need for opposing perspectives. Agonism, Mouffe believes, is necessary for the maintenance of democracy as it gives people the ability to have genuine choice. A well-functioning democracy, Mouffe writes,

> calls for a confrontation of democratic political positions. If this is missing, there is always the danger that this democratic confrontation will be replaced by a

> confrontation between non-negotiable moral values or essentialist forms of identification (Mouffe, 2018, p. 93).

I would reason that the artworks I discuss in this PhD demonstrate this claim. As I will establish, heterotopic frictions operate through a variety of practices, and can appear at points in the social fabric by the appropriation of established signifiers of power and control, media and communication such as borders, flags and language. The series of internationally renowned artists examined in each chapter have been selected in response to their application of themes, objects and processes in their art making, of which heterotopic friction exists in attitude. It is a catalyst for unconventional ways of thinking. It constructs counter-narratives, visualising multiple possibilities to question the relationship between identity, territory and language. It is not overtly aggressive, intentionally harmful, activist or exploitative. Through a lens of criticality, heterotopic friction creates spaces where we can imagine alternative worlds and explore counter-histories and counter-interpretations. Heterotopic friction can be humorous, absurd, confrontational, fantastical, theatrical, simplistic, minimal, subversive, provocative, rebellious and fictional. With a fascination towards how heterotopias contest space, create gaps or make openings in place and space, I am interested in where strata of places punctuate, make contact with and potentially reveal frictions.

Figure 2: Under the Welsh Flag (2010) Paul R Jones. Performance. © Mary Griffiths. All rights reserved.

> 'Everyone can enter into these heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion: we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded'.
>
> (Foucault, 1986, p. 26)

I begin this exploration of the terms 'territoriality' and 'identity' with an example of my own artistic practice. My performance, *Under the Welsh Flag* (2010), consisted of standing in a one metre squared tray of soil extracted from the Welsh hills, holding a Welsh flag with a CD playing the Welsh national anthem *Mae Wlad Fy Nhadau* ('Land of my Fathers'), and greeting people at the main entrance of the Whitworth Museum and Art Gallery in Manchester with the words '*Croeso I Gymru*' ('Welcome to Wales').

The performance was part of an arts festival that took as its subject the city as playground. My piece was an attempt to examine notions of territorialisation by claiming a bit of Wales in England through an absurd gesture of occupation. The situating of the work was serendipitous in that the Whitworth Museum and Art Gallery was showing, at the time, a major exhibition on borders and identity curated by Mary Griffiths.[5]

The performance took place in the grounds of a museum, that is, an institutional domain. This cultural site allowed dissent-like action to take place. That is, a site gave me *poetic licence* to explore cultural and politically motivated issues within relevantly safe and privileged surroundings. It is also important to stress that the audience who encountered the performance at such a location were often affluent in cultural capital and may have had previous experience of socially engaged encounters to which this performance was historically connected, for example, happenings and interventions.

Adopting the role of a fool or joker, as referred to by Anna Dezeuze when discussing Thomas Hirschhorn's tactical practices (Dezeuze, 2014), there was a sense of absurdity to the performance due to the way I conducted myself. I acted as if I believed that where I stood was really part of Wales. The work was provocative but without being overly aggressive. I welcomed the public through humorous encounters. After all, the idea of claiming a small area of England under Welsh sovereignty was ridiculous as, really, there can be no legal possibility of it ever happening.

[5] As I am an artist who explores the concept of territoriality and identity, *Under the Welsh Flag* (2010) developed out of previous performances I had staged as part of interventions in Nottingham (2010) and Norwich (2010). It was a speculative proposal submitted for the Free for Arts Festival, organised by students at the Manchester School of Art.

Figure 3: Under the Welsh Flag (2010) Paul R Jones. Performance. © Stewart Cowap. All rights reserved.

Under the Welsh Flag did not attempt to cultivate a solution through an act of *hard* antagonism but introduced alternative ways of experiencing public spaces. In her book *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (2013), Mouffe's interpretation of the public space opposes the prevailing idea of it being a 'terrain where one aims at creating consensus' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 92). For Mouffe, the public space is where 'conflicting points of view are confronted without any possibility of a final reconciliation' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 92). As a form of encounter, *Under the Welsh Flag* created friction through the temporary claiming of territory and access to it. Understood in this way, the purpose of the performance was one of instigating dialogue, albeit in a rather jovial way, that remained open, suspicious of any declaration of absolute resolution.

This performance visualised how territoriality is performed through the tendencies of *classification*, *communication* and *enforcement*, as theorised by Robert David Sack in his book *Human Territoriality* (1986). *Under the Welsh Flag* performed *classification* through the claiming of space. The tray of soil activated a heterotopic site in which a *them* and *us* conflict was made visible, being off-limits to some, whilst accessible to others (the performer or those who claim Welshness). Those classified as 'other' could be invited transiently into the space but remained outsiders. The performance projected the tendency of *communication* in that the space occupied by the tray of soil acted as a physical boundary to cross and an enclave, defining the site as both possessive and exclusionary. An enclave is a territory whose geographical boundaries lie within the borders of another territory. Therefore, it is totally surrounded. The word originates from the Latin *inclavatus,* meaning 'shut up' or 'locked up'. Its use was popularised through English diplomacy and can be dated back to 1868. There is also the principle of an exclave. This is a territory which is legally attached to a larger territory but is not physically nearby. *Maelor Saesneg*, 'English-speaking Maelor', was an exclave of the ancient county of Flintshire, created in 1536 and situated at Bangor-on-Dee. It was one of the last enclaves in Britain; in 1974 it became part of Wrexham. Enclaves can also include embassies and other extraterritorialities, for example the Forbidden City in China, or the Vatican in Rome. There are also records of temporary enclaves, one of the most famous being Camp Zeist, in the Netherlands, which in 2000 was declared sovereign territory of the United Kingdom and governed by Scottish law, so that the trial of the Lockerbie air disaster could take place on neutral territory. Another prominent example is Suite 212 at Claridge's Hotel, London, which was given by Britain to Yugoslavia on 17 June 1945 to allow Prince Alexander, whose parents were in exile, to be

born on Yugoslavian soil. It is said that a small deposit of Yugoslavian soil was placed under the bed where the child was born.

The display of the flag and the broadcasting of the Welsh national anthem further accented this communication of exclusion and possession. Together, the enclave of soil, the flag and the anthem acted as symbolic markers. This performance became a site of the heterotopia (Foucault, 1986), where access to space is regulated. These similarities to the heterotopia in the artistic inquiry are further explored in each of the chapters.

The site professed the physical manifestation of occupation, of a state's visible objects of power. Sack writes that territoriality 'can be the most efficient way of *enforcing* control' (Sack, 1986, p. 32). The performance challenged the tendency of *classification* by presenting a novel condition of territory that infiltrated the principal rules of ownership. The tray of soil was a container upon which the power of sovereignty was symbolically activated. In my role I had the power to defend the space or make an invitation for the public to enter. However, this power was fictitious, and could be broken down at any point during the performance, either peacefully or aggressively, for example, if an opportunist audience member or authority figure, such as a security guard or police officer, were to intervene. The question of how much I would prevent this was something that I considered prior to and during the performance without any real resolution. During the performance, the encounters with the public were usually non-confrontational, of a curious rather than aggressive nature. Although a couple of instances occurred that tested the tendencies of classification, communication and enforcement, none led to any overly physical or dialogical aggression. This is because the confrontations were defused mostly through humour or by my acting as if I were naïve to such issues. People who approached the site initially questioned what it

was I was doing. I explained that the space acted as an enclave of Wales in England. In the majority of cases, this declaration was greeted with jocularity. In the minority of cases in which the antagonistic nature of the action came to the fore, it was played down both by the audience and me. However, even if most encounters were well-mannered, on a few occasions the subject of occupation, colonialism and identity were discussed, and in a couple of instances, passionately so.

Figure 4: Under the Welsh Flag (2010) Paul R Jones. © Mary Griffiths. All rights reserved.

There are two more tendencies of territoriality that this work challenges and these are in its role as a *reification* symbol and an object of *displacement*. Sack describes reification as the 'means of making authority visible' and displacement as 'having people take the visible territorial manifestation as a source of power' (Sack, 1986, p. 38). When combined, reification and displacement 'produce a mystical view of place or territory' (Sack, 1986, p. 38). Considered in this way, the enclave of 'sanctified' soil, the flag and the anthem became

the *magic-representations* of power itself (Sack, 1986), that is, they could be read as the source of the power.

Lay of the Land

> Territory, as a component of power, is not only a means of creating and maintaining order, but is a device to create and maintain much of the geographical context through which we experience the world and give it meaning. (Sack, 1986, p. 219)

The literature and art practices that have examined territory are far-ranging. Geography, space and place is a rich area of investigation for political theorists, sociologists, philosophers and historians. Many thinkers have focused their attention on the operations of space and place in terms of culture, economics, society and politics (De Certeau, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 2004; Foucault 1986; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994, 2005/2015; Sack, 1986; Storey, 2012; Tuan, 2001). Also, a collective of art critics and curators have identified and examined the territorial or geographical 'turn' in art practices (Krauss, 1979; Kaye, 2000; Kwon, 2004; Lippard, 1997; Meyer, 2000; Rogoff, 2000). In each consecutive chapter, I will develop these readings in relation to my artistic inquiry. However, at this point my objective is to define the terms and relationship between 'territory', 'territoriality' and 'identity'.

Defining Territory and Territoriality

The establishing of territoriality is important to the research as it highlights the significance of power and control. I propose that geographical territoriality is a form of visual communication, which operates to make explicit the presence of power and relates to how identity is constructed and managed. Robert David Sack (1986) writes that territoriality is a fundamental geographical representation of power. For Sack, territoriality asserts itself in many ways. On one level, it is simply about the control of an area. Another level would be

the way in which groups or individuals influence or affect the actions of other people or phenomena such as establishing power over a geographical area. It can be signified through enforced control, classification of an area or by containing a form of communication, for example, a physical boundary acting as a symbolic form, a statement that conveys possession and exclusion. Territoriality can claim itself through reifying and displacement. By means of reification, territoriality makes potentialities that have power and influence explicit and visible. When it is used in terms of displacement it shifts the focus between that of the controlled and the controlling (Sack, 1986). Territoriality, therefore, is a form of apparatus with which humankind establishes and asserts spatial systems.

Likewise, David Storey reads territoriality and the construction of its geographical limits as fundamentally political and thus as instigating conflict and contention (Storey, 2012, p. 9). In his book, Storey questions the practices by which territories are constructed and visualised (Storey, 2012). He observes that territorial strategies are exercised to realise and retain hegemony. This hegemony over territory is key to the politically driven potencies and denotes a clear message of control (Storey, 2012, p. 18). The mapping of territory operates so as to 'enhance power by sending out messages signifying control over portions of geographical space' (Storey, 2012, pp. 24-25). Power, Storey asserts, can manifest in the form of the spatial that cuts through to even the most routine and common daily activities (Storey, 2012). Storey determines that territorial categories as behaviour fall into either the liberating or the oppressive. Social boundaries, territorial strategies, categorisation, discrimination and exclusion effect society and demonstrate the complexities of territory.

Territoriality: Exclusion Performance

Such social and geographic boundaries that exclude and effect are important in the understanding of my relationship to territory and identity. In his book, *Geographies of Exclusion* (1995), David Sibley examines the practice of territoriality through social anthropology and psychology. Sibley's argument centres on the premise that human territoriality can be understood as a landscape of exclusion. He focuses on the exclusions that are experienced in everyday life, that is, the events that do not make the news, go unnoticed, and in many cases are strategically concealed. Sibley questions the concept of place by asking who it is for, who it excludes, why it excludes and how the prohibitions are maintained. Sibley writes of how stereotypes can create negative emotions and how locality plays a significant role in this. He talks about how groups of a certain stereotype can be in the wrong place but alternatively can fuse with place. By this he means that they can fit into the expected conventions and clichés at that locality. On the one hand, those who are out of place create a sense of anxiety and prejudice whilst on the other, they can form unity and contentment. He observes that people are protective about the space they inhabit, and this is demonstrated through various intensities of action. This protective nature can expand from the home to a locality right through to a national level. The use of governmental policies, social rules and media messages act as regulators to prompt certain behaviours, emphasising concepts of inclusion and exclusion. Sibley observes that there are inherent rules of inclusion and exclusion in the landscape that are instrumental to the organisation of society and space. Whilst some will find this oppressive, others will see it as appealing (Sibley, 1995).

It could be argued that I allow myself to fall into a stereotype of exclusion. What I mean is that, like many people situated at the border between Wales and England, I project a series

of complicated cultural markers. As a non-Welsh speaker, I feel excluded and insecure when asked to define my Welshness. However, I am very protective of my sense of belonging in what is a predominantly English-speaking part of Wales. Politically, the Welsh landscape is contributory to, at least for me, the perplexity of feelings as to how I define my identity.

Juliet Steyn further explores these ideas of exclusion and inclusion, and, in her introduction to *Other Than Identity: The Subject, Politics and Art* (1997), observes that identity is the practice of 'differentiation between the self, not-self and other' (Steyn, 1997, p. 1). Steyn aims to destabilise the classification between identity and subject, to split these terms in order to recognise the otherness of self (Steyn, 1997, p. 3), such that any 'presentation of an Other is itself a political representation which sets up the drive for a liberating, emancipatory politics which can be figured as an overcoming' (Steyn, 1997, p. 3). Identification, Steyn writes, occurs by means of yearning and rejection, confirmation and negation. People's feelings towards others are dogged by conflict and contradictions; 'identity is imbued with projections of the Other as an erotic object and semiotic space' (Steyn, 1997, p. 4). This 'Other' combines suspicion and attraction. Steyn reads identity as being the creator of myth that galvanises people's sense of nationhood, creating a sense of the other as the foe, the accused, the monster to fear. Reaffirming this, Fredrik Barth, in his book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference,* suggests we implement ethnic identities to classify ourselves and those we encounter, creating a point of association (Barth, 1969). The ethnic group considers itself distinguishable from other ethnic groups. A form of 'boundary maintenance' is asserted in which criteria for evaluation and judgement of belonging is implemented (Barth, 1969). Therefore, the boundary ethic acts as a system that characterises a specific group of people.

Towards Defining Territory and Identity

Problematising my Anglo-Welsh identity includes questioning how a British or Welsh identity can be visualised. Storey writes that territory plays a pivotal role in the formation of identity. The way that a territory is envisioned is a significant part of how people *enact* identity, especially in terms of a national identity (Storey, 2012). Scrutinising how identity and territory operate in the UK, Storey is aware of the issues inherent in how Britishness is imagined. He observes a problematic misunderstanding in terms of an English and British sense of national identity: 'for many people in England', he writes, 'there is a tendency to assume the English identity is synonymous with British Identity' (Storey, 2012, p. 133). Storey believes that the Welsh and Scottish senses of identity are defined more distinctly. In these cases, people will define themselves as either Welsh/Scottish or British depending on priority. However, a problem lies in the fact that much that passes as a symbol of Britishness is emblematically English. These symbols for Storey include 'cricket, stiff upper lip, warm beer, village greens, rustic villages, gentle landscapes' (Storey, 2012, p. 133). This adoption of essentially English imagery, Storey judges, bolsters the sense of the supremacy of English culture over that of Scotland and Wales (Storey, 2012, p. 133).

The problematising of identity is further examined by Katie Gramich in her essay 'Cymru or Wales? Explorations in a Divided Sensibility' (1997). Gramich begins with a statement made by the poet R.S. Thomas, which has relevance for the friction between Welsh versus British claims of a united national identity. For Thomas, 'Britishness is a mask. Under it there is only one nation and that is England. The Celtic countries are just provinces on its outer edges' (Thomas, 1995, p. 155). In response, Gramich reasons that the hostilities the Welsh perpetuate are due to the country's residual colonial history and leanings towards 'imperialist ways of thinking' (Gramich, 1997, p. 101). Gramich highlights the complexities

involved in territory and Welsh identity by referencing the sociologist Denis Balsom's 'Three-Wales Model'. This model situates Welsh identity within three categories that are based on how the Welsh perceive their ethnic identity and language. Balsom's study divides the country into British Wales in the east and parts of Pembrokeshire, Welsh Wales to the south, and Y Fro Gymraeg to the west (Balsom, 1985). With regards to how the Anglo-Welsh view themselves, Gramich observes that they are inclined to be offended by those who believe themselves to be truly Welsh, and tend to defend their Welsh identity and harden themselves against the Welsh language (Gramich, 1997). It was from this perspective that my own identity was moulded.

I find this tension between local and regional identity, and its connection to territory, useful for my inquiry. On the one hand, the local and regional offer a space in which to cement identity; however, Anthony Smith, in his book *National Identity* (1991), is aware of how regions fracture into localities that in turn splinter into settlements. He describes the ways that national identity is rooted in the territorial and the civic yet is also concerned with heredity and ethnicity.[6] This, he observes, is what makes national identity 'multidimensional' and malleable without a sense of losing its uniqueness when combined with other prevailing ideologies, such as the economic or political. Smith understands concepts of national identity within the West as very much concerned with that of the territorial. This understanding of identity is about how nations occupy distinct territories, where, as Smith describes, the people and territory are bonded to one another. For me

[6] National identities are constructed through 'historical territory, legal-political community, legal-political equalities of members, and common civic culture and ideology' (Smith, 1991, p. 11).

personally, this would be the North East Wales border region, where much of my art practice has been situated, and my identity shaped.

I agree with Smith that there needs to be a sense of a homeland, a connection to heritage and shared memory. In this way, territory becomes distinctive, and the landscape, from the mountains and lakes to the urban, are 'sanctified' and magical and embody hidden meanings that only those who are exclusive can decipher and truly call their own (Smith, 1991). One way people enact identity is through the invention of 'historical landscapes', for example locations of outstanding beauty, industrial heritage sites or national monuments. Along with these examples, key historical events, narratives, legends and myths are significant components in a how a nation perceives itself.

Storey (2012) is aware of the significance of how a 'national soil' is used in the narrative of defining a nation. But these allusions to land and soil are also problematic, as they can be appropriated to serve more disturbing objectives. In his book *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur,* (2007), Ben Kiernan writes of how these terms have been used historically within the context of religion, territorial expansion, racism and genocide. Soil can be both fertile and contaminated, but these terms are also connected to colonialism and race. The Romanisation of the pastoral landscape has more sinister connotations (Kiernan, 2007). The description of soil and land have been connected to racial ideologies, for example, the slogan 'Blood and soil', *Blut und Boden* in German, being used by the Nazi party to promote an idealised concept of the connection between nationhood and homeland (Kiernan, 2007, p. 428).

Soil and land are also depicted in national anthems (Storey, 2012, p. 113), which use generic territorial descriptions that are full of sentimentality and elevate the historical and mythical

aspects of place to galvanise a nation's sense identity. *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* ('Land of my Fathers') directly connects the concept of Welsh identity to the land. Filled with territorial references, its lyrics allude to the outstanding beauty of Welsh mountains, valleys and rivers. Although celebratory, the use of landscape in anthems can be politically charged. As Storey notes, many anthems recall notions of defence of the soil of one's homeland against enemies, and promote often questionable ideologies of nation-ness[7] (Storey, 2012). As Storey observes, 'the defence of the homeland is a recurring theme: the salvation, or maintaining, of territorial integrity is seen as critical rather than the obtaining of democracy or a particular form of government' (Storey, 2012, p. 115). Other complexities of the symbolic use of landscape include situations in which two or more different ethno-national groups claim the same space as their own, such as in the case of Palestine and Israel, or when a territory remains unresolved, as experienced, for example, in the Balkans or Ireland (Storey, 2012, p. 116). The importance of the historical and mythical implications of landscape within such contexts are used to impose a sense of entitlement to that place.

Aware of these controversial aspects of using soil as a metaphor, my intention is more focused on an inquiry into the ambiguity of a Welsh/English national identity and territory. I have often used soil as a symbolic material within my art practice in order to emphasise a sense of place. My use of soil, particularly in works like *Under the Welsh Flag* (2010), links to the concept of 'configurations of territorialisation' and 'geographies of resistance' (Storey, 2012, p. 188). Configurations of territorialisation include the practices of building fences and walls, the erecting of flags, border signage, street names, monuments, the performance of

[7] Storey illustrates such an example by recalling the lyrics of the Mexican anthem: 'should a foreign enemy dare to profane your soil with his tread know, beloved fatherland, that heaven gave you a soldier in each of your sons' (Storey, 2012, p. 115). Similarly, the Welsh national anthem includes lyrics that call for a challenge to any enemy who would dare to oppress the land, language or harp.

parades, and the maintaining of language. Geographies of resistance, however, manifest as subversive territorial marking practices, for example, kerb painting and murals, as experienced in Ireland, tagging and graffiti, or the use of trainers hanging over telephone cables or lamp posts that often signify gang territory. In my artistic practice, I have explored both configurations of territorialisation and geographies of resistance. Many outcomes for the artistic inquiry that follow include a preference for geographical markers that operate mainly for the belief systems of the dominant hegemony and the questioning of such established contexts.

Towards Defining the Self and Subjectivity

As previously outlined, the research is approached through the method of autoethnography. The inquiry arises from personal perspectives about identity, territory and language. I am therefore aware of the research being viewed through a subjective lens as it includes a form of self-examination. Subjectivity is influenced by a social framework that includes the language, customs and heritage of the society we live in (Woodward, 1997, p. 39). Different theoretical frameworks exploring the potential and the problematics of using such a method encompass writings within the field of feminism (hooks, 1999; Massey, 1994; Rogoff, 2000; Woodward, 1997), postcolonialism (Bhabha, 1994; Bohata, 2004), gender studies and queer theory (Butler, 2006; Sibley, 1995), postmodernism (Bauman, 2000), ethnicity and nationalism (Smith, 1991) and Marxism and post-Marxism (Agamben, 1998; Anderson, 2016; Rancière, 1992; Williams, 1960/2006). Just as geography is written from feminist, postcolonial, queer and postmodernist perspectives, one's subjectivity is influenced and situated in one or more of these positions. Describing subjectivity in connection to her relationship to place, in *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (2000) Irit Rogoff comprehends geography through gender, race and space, which formulate who

we are and what we know (Rogoff, 2000, p. 11). Writing from a feminist epistemological stance, Rogoff reads geography and space as gendered and racialised – a space that is constantly being negotiated though language, gaze and gesture (Rogoff, 2000, p. 28).

I approach subjectivity through an ethnographical reading of how one's own cognition and feelings, both at a conscious and unconscious level, form a sense of self. It is where the self and the social exist in negotiation. However, I am aware that due to its embodiment of unconscious thoughts of the self, subjectivity involves negation and can be inconsistent. Woodward observes that 'the concept of subjectivity allows for an exploration of the feelings which are brought and the personal investment which is made in positions of identity and of the reasons why we are attached to particular identities'[8] (Woodward, 1997, p. 39). Smith (1991) reaffirms this when he speaks of the self that is configured by territory, ethnicity, gender, class and kinship. It is a complex composition of all these strands structured by fixed and morphing classifications (Smith, 1991, p. 4). Smith writes that the need for a collective identity can serve as a potent agency to define and situate the self. This perspective helps to determine who we are in an unstable and changing world (Smith, 1991, p. 17). Promisingly, in attempting to rediscover our sense of culture, we can rediscover our sense of authentic self and belonging (Smith, 1991, p. 17).

Rogoff questions how identity reveals itself in the context of visual culture (Rogoff, 2000, p. 20), beginning her investigations into subjects, places and spaces with the question 'where do I belong?' This question is often implicated in the attempt to define identity within a

[8] Woodward (1997) points to Althusser's term *interpellation*, meaning the operations with which we associate ourselves with a specific identity. This form of subject-position takes place at the level of the unconscious (Woodward, 1997, p. 42). *Interpellation* simultaneously 'positions and names the subject who is thus recognized and produced through symbolic processes and practices' (Woodward, 1997, p. 43).

destabilised world, where displacement and transition complicate our 'self-positioning' of language, culture and nationhood (Rogoff, 2000, p. 14). I empathise with Rogoff's question. The wanting to understand where I belong is central to the research inquiry. This positioning is also reflected in Storey's assertion that territory contains the power to affirm or withhold identity (Storey, 2012, p. 216). Located at such a site of instability, attempting to situate oneself becomes about continuous negotiations. As Rancière explores in his essay 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization' (1992), the site from which to realise difference is at an 'an interval or a gap: being *together* to the extent that we are *in between* – between names, identities, cultures, and so on' (Rancière, 1992, p. 62). It is here that Rancière distinguishes a 'new politics of the in-between' (Rancière, 1992, p. 63). Through heterotopic frictions, this concept of the in-between is played out, as will be demonstrated in the artistic inquiry, as I question where I belong and negotiate perceptions of identity.

Identity and Territory and Heterotopic Friction

In the essay *Spacing the Interior: The Carceral Body as Heterotopia in Contemporary Palestinian Cinema* (2020), Robert G. White observes that the symbols of identity have become overcoded (White, 2020, p. 101), and that such symbols are problematic representations of identity that are 'deconstructed in often absurd ways' (White, 2020, p. 101). For White, spaces in which the imagery of identity is questioned are 'perhaps the true spaces of critique, heterotopias of illusion, that highlight the illusory'; thus, heterotopic friction is a 'space of critique' (White, 2020, p. 101) that allows for 'new assemblages to form in constant becoming' (Faramelli, 2020, p. 148). Heterotopic friction is a form of spatial resistance that emerges subjectively, such as when questioning cultural identity (Hetherington, 1997). Examining the relationships between identity and territory,

heterotopic friction opens a new space of possibility, where the imagined or the virtual encounters the real.

To conclude, territoriality reflects the relationship to people and land, and is a process by which a group or an individual claim and maintain a territory (Storey, 2012; Sack, 1986). It can be a way for a dominant hegemony to assert its power, or act as a device of resistance in the form of a counter-hegemonic response. As discussed above, Storey outlines three facets that define territoriality. Firstly, it provides a form of *classification* of an area, secondly, it is *communicative* by the setting of limits and boundaries, and lastly, it is a form of control and *enforcement*. It is also a practice of behaviour, setting limits to what can and cannot be done within a specified space. These behaviours have an impact on how an identity is formed and visualised. As part of the territorial imagery, national, regional and local identity is very much controlled by that of the dominate hegemony. However, geographies of resistance, that is, the many antagonisms that exist in society (Mouffe, 2013), constantly operate in order to oppose any fixed behaviours determined by those in power. As well as being a device by which power is visualised, territoriality can also be used to imagine the potentialities of resistance. I propose that territoriality is the practice of how territory is managed, and I argue that identity is part of this. As has been discussed, identity is intrinsically linked to territory. Just as the possessing of a space is used in order to define an identity, identity is used as a *classification* device to *communicate* and *enforce* the limits of place.

CHAPTER 1: Border Reconnaissance: Sites of Identity, Criticality and Performance

Before discussing borders within a Welsh/English context, I wish to reflect on the definition of what a geographical border is and explore concepts related to it being the site of performance, and its aesthetics. This investigation will contribute to situating the analysis of my own and other artists' practices related to this subject.

When considering borders, terms such as control, crossings, politics, culture and identity are often singled out as areas of study. Borders are of interest to geographers, economists, lawyers, anthropologist, political theorists and philosophers. My interest in the border, both at a conceptual and geographical level, is in its ability to act as an aesthetic phenomenon. This chapter explores how geographical borders can be used as a medium in art practice. The border is both an object and a generator of objects, be they people, documentation, data, photographs, signage, souvenirs, walls or fences. It is also the architect of memories and narratives. Border spaces, borderlands and border zones are points at which demarcation and displacement are negotiated. Through bordering we are neither in nor out, here or there. We are at a liminal point of becoming. We are situated in the process of being granted acceptance or rejected, being allowed legality or classified as an illegal. It is where identity is constructed and tested.

Theoretical Positions

Literature dedicated to the study of borders is wide-ranging (Balibar 2002a; De Certeau, 2002; Rogoff, 2000; Sack, 1986; Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007). Marcel De Certeau claims, in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2002), that the boundary, the frontier and the bridge are in-between spaces that act as a zone of conflict (De Certeau, 2002, p. 127). De Certeau

details the power relations inherent in these by describing the *fãs* ritual, which is a political and military act of marking out the operations of the boundary. This Roman ritual is carried out by a priest or *fētiāles* and is performed in three stages. The first involves a procession within one's own territory. Secondly, the procession moves across the frontier and thirdly, it occupies the foreign territory. Importantly for this research project, the *fãs* is a theatre of action, a place that instigates and authorises territoriality (De Certeau, 2002, p. 125).

Defining the Border

A detailed account of borders from a philosophical perspective is found in *What Is a Border?* (2002) by Étienne Balibar, who puts forward the proposal that borders operate through three characteristics – *overdetermination*, *polysemic nature* and *heterogeneity*. *Overdetermination* is where states combine for economic or political reasons, as in, for example, the European Union. Within such a condition, there are borders and super-borders, the creation of which complicates and multiplies the types of foreigner together with a multiplication of types of border crossing (Balibar, 2002a, p. 80). The *polysemic nature* of the border is in reference to their function being different depending on who encounters or crosses them. The way that a border is crossed by the businessperson or the immigrant is different in terms of the operations of the laws, policing and administration at that border (Balibar, 2002a, pp. 81-82). This is a form of differentiation – creating limits on who has freedoms and who does not. The border can be a point of 'symbolic acknowledgement' (Balibar, 2002a, p. 83) of a person's status to travel freely or an obstacle to be confronted, rejected from, or temporally trapped within. Finally, the *heterogeneity* of borders relates to the multiplicity of its presence, between social exchanges, territoriality and delineation (Balibar, 2002a). Balibar observes that the coinciding of the socioeconomic, political and cultural at border zones is being replaced by a more ubiquitous system. Borders

are now ‘elsewhere, wherever selected controls are to be found, such as for example, *health* or *security* checks’ (Balibar, 2002a, p. 84). This new ‘ubiquity of borders’, as Balibar describes it, no longer maintains the centralisation of these things being performed at a ‘single point – along a single line which was simultaneously refined and densified, opacified’ (Balibar, 2002a, p. 84). For Balibar, the *everywhere of the border* can be related to the fact that borders no longer simply appear at the border (Balibar, 2002b). Balibar observes that ‘customs examinations, verifications of identity, payments of duties and tolls’ (Balibar, 2002b, p. 89) can be carried out at *institutional zones*, *zones of transit,* or *negotiation zones* and operate both on the ground and in digital domains. In this form ‘borders are being thinned out and doubled, becoming border *zones, regions*, or *countries*’ (Balibar, 2002b, p. 92). They are also ‘the object of protest and contestation as well as an unremitting reinforcement, notably of their security function’ (Balibar, 2002b, p. 92). As we will explore in later sections of this chapter, all three types of border have been examined and challenged within visual arts.

Lines, Diversions and Demarcations

For David Newman, in his essay ‘The Lines that Continue to Separate us – Borders in Our “Borderless” World’ (2007), the world we inhabit is made up of lines and divisions that function to bring a sense of control over our everyday lives. Newman draws attention to the concept of bordering, which is the process of border demarcation and management. To demarcate is a method by which the border is built, and this in turn dictates how the border is managed. Newman explains that demarcation is the process which creates classifications and where the criteria lie by which difference and separation are determined (Newman, 2007, p. 35).

Irit Rogoff (2000) perceives that the common view of geographical borders is synonymous with the negative. That is, borders are regarded as the dividing line between 'them' and 'us'. To cross a border line means that either you have found refuge or you are exiled. Rogoff observes that borders create a point of view, focusing on the demonisation of the 'other'.

Examining the border from the perspective of divisions, traces and thresholds, Rogoff asserts that the real power of the border lies in its position as a concept rather than a physical manifestation. Borders are 'not the embodiment of fierce efforts to keep separations intact but the tracing of another order, far removed and so powerful that it can maintain itself through a gesture so slight and unemphatic' (Rogoff, 2000, p. 114).

In order to develop her argument, Rogoff applies a taxonomy of line division framed by her reading of Deleuze's segmented line, molecular line and line of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). This interpretation moves away from the idea of the border line being derived from notions of 'advance and retreat that are the direct results of battles lost and won, conquests, occupations and negotiated concessions and withdrawals' (Rogoff, 2000, p. 116), towards a concept of the border being in a 'process of becoming' (Rogoff, 2000, p. 116), by which border lines are 'active; of flight, of crossing, of the ability to carry us away' (Rogoff, 2000, p. 116). Here, borders can act as sites of erasure, where the possibilities of crossing the line can instigate the stripping away of any cultural baggage that may have 'accompanied the subject on [their] journey' (Rogoff, 2000, p. 118). Borders can be sites of continuous hybridisation in that they 'reduce complexities on either side of the line' (Rogoff, 2000, p. 119). Furthermore, beyond the conventional scope of nation states and countries, Rogoff argues, exist sites such as no man's land, demilitarisation zones, and ghettos that challenge the traditional sign system of geographical order. These zones arise in regions of

evacuation and abandonment (Rogoff, 2000, p. 120) and remain in suspension amid diverse identities (Rogoff, 2000, p. 120).

Alternative Border Imaginaries: A Biopolitical Practice

Drawing upon the writings of Balibar, Vaughan-Williams problematises the concept of borders in regard to how they can be experienced not simply at a fixed geographical point, but as 'infused through bodies and diffused throughout everyday life' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 9). He questions the 'relationship between the concept of the border of the state and our understanding of practices of sovereignty, violence and (bio)power in contemporary political life' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 9). Influenced by Foucault, Vaughan-Williams un-fixes the concept of a border as geopolitical, scrutinising it from a biopolitical perspective. Vaughan-Williams approaches this analysis through discussing border practices that question the geopolitical imagery of state borders. These include offshore bordering practices, identity capture and management, and integrated border security, for example Frontex in Europe.

Borders are not simply lines on a map but 'portable machines of sovereign power' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 39) and in this way they are connected to one's body. Before a person is allowed to move through space, their bodies are encoded, fixing their identity, classifying them as either high or low risk, as legal or alien (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 59).

The review of the above literature contains much that can instigate specific investigations within artistic practice from an examination of the border's ability to divide, to be transformative, to be present within multiple spaces, as well as to create zones of dis-identification.

The Border: A Performance Space

In the following sections, I will develop a theoretical and critical framework for looking at borders as theatrical spaces, as previously outlined in De Certeau's description of the *fãs*, and as places with an aesthetic dimension. Sharing some of the themes developed by Rogoff (2000), Balibar (2002a) and Newman (2007), Sophie Nield, in her essay 'On the Border as Theatrical Space' (2006), explores the 'theatricality of the border' (Nield, 2006, p. 61) and how this produces the person who sets out to cross it, be they migrant or refugee. Nield maps out the border as a space of emergence and dislocation. Similar to how the amalgamation of stage and actor creates a fictional space, borders and the refugee come into being at a specific moment. Nield expands the notion of theatricality in order to examine how borders are spaces that produce bodies that are presented but are also a representation (Nield, 2006). These representations manifest in the presentation of passports or other forms of travel permits, the oral histories that are told, and the photographs and objects that are carried. The border, itself appearing through the demonstration of bureaucracy, is 'the site in which identity (or its lack) is staged, enacted and performed' (Nield, 2006, p. 69). It is the space in which those who cross procure the role of an actor, while the border guards, administrators and observers are the audience (Nield, 2006, p. 65).

> We are, ultimately, held in tension between here and there as the theatre holds us in tension between here and there. We are able to move only in so far as we are able to appear at the margins, at the borders, only in so far as we are able to accurately represent ourselves to the audience we encounter there. (Nield, 2006, p. 69)

Border Poetics/Border Aesthetics

Nield's theory shares common themes with Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe's concept of border poetics. In their introduction to *Border Poetics De-limited* (2007), Schimanski and

Wolfe define the practice of border poetics as a series of strategies with which to analyse success or failure when crossing borders. From the experience at a border a narrative emerges, through which characters appear and events happen. Border poetics encompasses global as well as more banal and local narratives. This can be at the micro level of the individual or the macro level, in which those grand narratives of border formation are the theatrical setting (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007, p. 10). Narratives of how borders are formed and maintained have been extensively explored within the social sciences. Borders both geographical and imagined have also been explored in literary and cultural studies, from symbolic borders, such as class, gender and the body, to spatial borders in the real world. Border poetics explores both the topographical border and the symbolic border. Borders are a dissemination of information through acts of translation and decoding that can be aesthetically approached through artworks and texts (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007, p. 16).

Wolfe's own research into border aesthetics is defined by the notion that borders can be read as aesthetic objects and produce aesthetic effects. Wolfe's analysis has included the study of film and literature produced either in or around the concept of border regions (Kurki & Kirsi, 2012), addressing the question of in what ways 'aesthetic activity participates in the processes by which people relate to the real and conceptual geographies in which they live and through which they move' (Kurki & Kirsi, 2012, p. 110). The principle aims of exploring borders as an aesthetic is to develop a resource of an aesthetics of space, which would be of value when evaluating groups, significance, items and actions that pass through borders. It also questions how the border itself acquires values and what those values might be (Kurki & Kirsi, 2012).

This concept is further argued by Svend Erik Larsen in *Boundaries – Ontology, Methods, Analysis* (2007). Larsen notes that a border can be understood as an aesthetic phenomenon due to operating as the producer of meaning (Larsen, 2007). Borders generate a 'sensual impression' (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007, p. 15). For Larsen, aesthetics is the study of 'sensible forms created by humans in various media we are able to use in order to produce meaning about our world of experience' (Larsen, 2007, p. 100). Here aesthetics is an activity that produces and shapes culture. Aesthetics is also the examination of the fluctuating states of affect, impact and the modifications produced by our interaction with the border. It is through aesthetics that an individual mediates their experience with the border (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007, p. 25). Registering borders at a semiotic level, Larsen interprets a boundary as a sign rather than a thing (Larsen, 2007, p. 113). It is an 'aesthetic event taking place in a specific medium' (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007, p. 15). Echoing other established theoretical positions (Balibar, 2002b; Newman, 2007; Rogoff, 2000), Larsen observes that all boundaries are 'meaning-producing' (Larsen, 2007, p. 98). A boundary does not exist as a thing in itself. It is constructed by what is on either side of it. These places determine its specificity and production of meaning. Boundaries are always double-facing: they are a border *between* and a border *to* (Larsen, 2007, p. 98).

Territoriality and Borders

As previously discussed, territory can be both fixed and mobile and can be used to exclude, contain and restrain (Sack, 1986, p. 20). Walls, fences and so on act as devices of control and occur in varying degrees. The boundary has an affective influence on behaviours by regulating access to both resources and power. Sack notes that territoriality is the basic spatial form that power takes. Storey agrees with Sack's proposition, seeing borders as crucial to how territoriality acts as the spatial articulation of power. He interprets them as

falling into two main types, the first being those that define spaces officially and the second being those that are less formal and not as defined (Storey, 2012, p. 18). Both function similarly and are concerned with the exclusion and accentuation of access to land. There is always the dominant and the 'other'. However, this structure is not stable or fixed as there is always a testing of territorial boundaries in which people resist predetermined power structures and try to assert their existence (Storey, 2012, p. 9).

A postmodern reading of borders proposes that they have become more porous and transient. There are those who believe that, as globalisation increased in momentum, formal state borders became less significant than they had been previously (Storey, 2012, p. 9). This is linked to the pace at which communication technologies have developed and made formal borders superfluous. Storey believes that the concept of a borderless world is not entirely a reality. Although agreeing with the claim that borders are not changeless, the effects of capitalism and globalisation only work to re-enforce borders that are constantly being realigned, re-constructed and relentlessly contested (Storey, 2012, p. 9).

Situating Art Practice

After compiling a review of the literature concerned with borders, I now move on to an analysis of how borders are used as a context and a medium in artistic practice. I would argue that Balibar's concept of the *polysemic character* of the border, where the way people function at the border depends on who they are (illegal immigrant, border guard, businessperson), could provide a suitable framework for artistic inquiry. In the artwork I examine, the border acts as a site of political and cultural encounter.

Many artists have approached the complexities of borders and bordering. The artists below explore various manifestations of the border in their work, whilst trying to visualise and

challenge their conditions. The narratives that they construct range between the autobiographical, political, local and global. Often these artists have confronted the subject using methods such as political activism, as in the work of Heath Bunting,[9] or hyperbolic performance, as for example Gómez-Peña does.[10] Here I will focus my attention on artists Christian Philip Müller, Bani Abidi, Francis Alÿs, Carl Michael von Hausswolff and Leif Elggren, and Marcus Coates, whose art practices function through a mode of heterotopic friction, whilst creating situations that promote open-ended dialogues.

Trespassing Border Lines

The border is made of many levels, one being that of the perceptible *manifestation*, and the *conditions* of that manifestation. The *manifestation*, for example, can include a river or a roadside curb (Larsen, 2007, p. 98), whereas the *conditions* are the how and why of a manifestation.

For the 45th Biennial in Venice (1993), Gerwald Rockenschaub (Austria), Andrea Fraser (USA) and Christian Philip Müller (Switzerland) collaborated on the Austrian Pavilion. This collaboration threatened the notions of national identity as it created a break from tradition, which, since the Biennial's conception in 1895, had been that each nation would be separately presented in its own designated pavilion. The action of this multinational

[9] BorderXing (2000-) and D'Fence Cutting (2002) are part of Heath Bunting's larger investigation into politics and control in both the physical and digital worlds.

[10] Gómez-Peña's work deals directly with border and identity. His performances are theatrical, exaggerated and often comic. He presents himself as the 'other', playing on fear and vilification specifically in response to the Mexican-US border, the border being on the one side, where poverty begins, and the other, where wealth and freedom are promised. Rogoff (2000) observes that Gómez-Peña often examines the border as both a site of erasure, that is, the stripping away of cultural, civic and linguistic baggage (Rogoff, 2000, p. 118), and as a site in which a hybridisation of cultures is played out. Gómez-Peña describes himself as a border citizen and juxtaposes US and Latin pop culture. He claims his work is about a reversed anthropology. He creates a fictional world where dominant cultures are displaced from the centre, allowing minority culture to take precedence (Gómez-Peña, 2011).

collaboration highlighted the concerns of the Austrian state after entry into the European Union. Müller's contribution *Grüne Grenze (Green Border)* included a reinstallation of a garden area, which had previously been left overgrown, the documentation of eight illegal crossings of the borders of neighbour states and a series of landscape prints dated from 1895, the same year of the first Venice Biennial. These prints represented a sense of loss, as they document a landscape that was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1867 and 1918.

Believing that the tourist is one of the most inconspicuous figures in contemporary society, Müller dressed himself in the attire of a hiker, the perfect guise in order to blend into the landscape. Each crossing took place specifically in woodland regions. These green borders function as barriers between Austria and its neighbouring countries. When at the point of crossing each border, Müller documented it in the form of a postcard which would be sent to gallery owners and friends.[11]

During a crossing between Austria and the Czech Republic, Müller was allegedly caught and banned from entering the country for three years. However, in reality the risk of crossing these borders was minimal to the artist who, as Müller confesses, plays the role of a symbolic fool, unlike the political refugee who forever runs the risk of losing their life in order to cross national and international borders (Meyer, 2000, p. 55). Overall, the work operated on four levels. Firstly, there was the crossing of the natural boundary, secondly the historical shifting of boundary as documented through the landscape drawing, thirdly the architectural boundary of the pavilion itself and fourthly the reinstallation of a botanical

[11] The postcards contained a statement reminiscent of On Kawara's I AM STILL ALIVE series. Müller's version included 'I crossed the border and I'm still alive', Müller in Conversation with Meyer, J, in Müller, C. P., Buchmann, S., Kaiser, P., Stakemeier, K., & Uhlmann, J. (2007) (p.54).

feature which occupied a no man's land to the side of the Austrian Pavilion (Stakemeier, 2007, p. 74).

Dividing Lines – The Visual Examination of Partition

Born to Indian parents who came to Pakistan after the Partition, Bani Abidi's art practice reveals the cultural unease between these two countries. Using performance, video and photography, Abidi's artwork focuses on borders. It is concerned with how a line on a map can divide and separate history and culture. Very much influenced by her own feelings of separation, being born in India but growing up in Pakistan, Abidi is interested in the 'specificity of locality' (National Gallery of Victoria, n.d.), of language and regional cultures and the construction and editing of histories. Many of Abidi's works examine how the powers of state apparatus are performed in everyday terms (Raza, 2012). Drawing on the cultural tensions between India and Pakistan, Abidi examines the conflicts inherent in such cultural identities. Greatly influenced by the films she saw whilst studying in Chicago, much of her output appropriates a documentary or narrative film aesthetic that is often infused with humour.

During her early career, Abidi turned the camera on herself to examine how social boundaries are enforced through everyday activities. These performances included eating mangoes and sharing oral histories, *Mangoes* (1999), dancing to popular Indian and Pakistani songs, *Anthems* (2000), and taking on the role of a news presenter, *The News* (2001). From 2004 onwards, Abidi has relied on actors and more sophisticated film production, as in works such as *RESERVED* (2006), *Boy Who Got Tired of Posing* (2006) and *Death at a 30 Degree Angle* (2012). Abidi's concern for how borders work at a social level can be seen in *The Distance From Here* (2010), which, as part of a larger project titled

Section Yellow, examined the inflated bureaucratic nature of visa application. In this 12-minute video piece we are presented with a makeshift border control situated in an empty car park at an undisclosed location. This is intercut with shots from what appears to be an embassy reception, where we are witnesses to the arduous ritual of waiting. For these scenes Abidi selected close-ups of people's faces, each reflective of the emotional condition induced by such a situation, including anxiety, boredom and submissiveness. In contrast to this, the scenes shot at an external location operate at a more absurd level. In these sections we see people being searched by guards, paperwork checked, and queues formed. The props selected for this performance are crudely constructed. The officer's work at rusty, weather-worn metal tables, and beside these stands a walk-through metal detector, made from recycled wood and painted yellow, that functions to demarcate a holding area. In the film we are aware of the externality of the scene through the noise of crows and traffic. This all adds to the surreal quality of the situation in which the actors are placed in a form of what Nada Raza describes as purgatory, in which there is a 'loss of control over their destinies, and [a] resignation to the ritual humiliations of the world they are subject to' (Raza, 2012, p. 130). It could be interpreted that *The Distance From Here* examines India's paranoia of contentious territorial tensions and fear of terrorist attacks from Pakistan, which has led to tightened border security (Doshi, 2011). Abidi shows how people are emotionally affected at an everyday level. Those wishing to cross the border from Pakistan to India are subjected to a series of physical and psychological trials without any definite assurance that they will be given the freedom to cross the line at the end of such a process.

Security Barriers A-L (2008) further amplifies this sense of control and fear. The work consists of 12 digitally rendered drawings depicting various types of barrier that Abidi had identified being used as separation devices in Karachi after 2001. Each diagram is

accompanied by a text describing where the barrier was situated. Abidi selects barriers that include the standard 'Jersey' barrier and other types that double up as planters, as in *Security Barrier Type J – British Deputy High Commission, Shahrah-e-Iran, Karachi.* In response to 9/11, Jersey barriers and other blockade structures are part of what Wendy Brown terms 'Security Architecture' (Brown, 2010, p. 76). Installed to protect against suicide car bombers, the barriers are also symbolic of a culture of fear. They are performative in that they assist in the 'scenography of a state of emergency' (Brown, 2010, p. 76). Visualising the barriers as hard-edge vector drawings set against a white background, Abidi renders them sterile. Distanced from the reality of placement in front of buildings and roadsides, the barriers become clinical. However, this does not detract from them being read as control mechanisms, serving to protect from imminent terrorist attacks. Barriers, both in situ and as a diagram, can induce states of anxiety in a society conditioned to be perpetually in an exaggerated state of alert and overtly security attentive.

Barriers are installed to create zones of control, enclaves and areas of no trespassing. After 9/11 they became a fundamental architectural presence in a world that was under the threat of weapons of mass destruction. The absurdity of the fact that these concrete or metal constructions would have no effect on such attacks is immaterial. As Brown observes, 'state-generated discourses of fear and danger reflect, interpellate, and construct the affect of subjects' (Brown, 2010, p. 78). In *Security Barriers A-L (*2008) Abidi draws attention to how political powers make use of an 'architecture of dissassurance' (Boddy, 2008, pp. 281-82) to legitimise hyper-vigilance.

The situations that Abidi references in her work are absurd, so much so that there is little requirement for her to overemphasise their absurdity in the artworks. For example, in *The*

Distance From Here, by simply constructing a makeshift environment that simulates a visa embassy setting, Abidi observed that people instinctively knew how to act. Unable to attain permission to film in the actual environments, Abidi created an absurd space where in response the actors amplified their performance of an absurd situation (Abidi, 2011).

Action Painting

Appropriating concepts associated with anthropology and geopolitics within everyday terms, Francis Alÿs' art practice includes interventions in the public space, installations, drawings, video and painting. The outcomes of these examinations of the everyday do not aim to provide solutions but to create a space for open-ended discussion and questioning. This space includes questioning the role of the artist at times of social unrest and global instability (Zwirner, 2016).

Francis Alÿs' performance *The Green Line* (2004-2005) has been well documented both in terms of its impact on public art practices and in terms of political implications (Godfrey, 2010; Weizman, 2010; Alan Paul, 2011). The action consisted of a walk through the city of Jerusalem where he casually allowed green paint to leak from a small can. This action referenced the line drawn by the Israeli military leader Moshe Dayan in 1949 on a 1:20,000 scale map using a thick green pencil. This line signified the boundary between Palestinian and Israeli territory and demarcates the cease-fire between Jordan and Israel. Eyal Weizman, in his essay 'The 1:1 Map' (2010), interprets *The Green Line* as an intervention in the field of political visibility (Weizman, 2010, p. 176).

Filmed in collaboration with Julien Devaux in the style of a fly-on-the-wall documentary, Alÿs' walk showed him attempting to follow, as accurately as possible, the route of the actual green line through various urban and rural landscapes. Edited with jump cuts

between the drip of the paint on the ground, and incidental encounters with the public, who look with both confusion and curiosity at his actions, Alÿs creates a line that at times is fluid, and at other times interspersed drips. Due to the technique in which the paint is poured, the line is never straight. It zigzags, and loops, breaks up. His performance is reminiscent of action painting, but in this piece the earth is acting as a canvas (Alan Paul, 2011, p. 60). Weizman, in an interview with Alÿs, describes the action as flattening the city as if it were a map. In this way, Alÿs makes the city into an abstract (Weizman & Alÿs, 2007). The work can be understood as a performance that lies between walking and mapping. When Alÿs drips paint upon the earth it creates a complex, territorial drawing, at a scale of 1:1, that is both a performance *of* space and a performance *in* space (Weizman, 2010, p. 176).

The dripping of the paint from a can is reminiscent of slapstick humour. The artist wanders the streets with a casualness that almost suggests he is unaware of what is going on. It appears that Alÿs does not, as in the case of action painting, focus on the types of line or mark-making that the paint is creating on the dusty roads. There is an element of absurdity to this act. Besides an initial shot of the can being filled with green paint and its base being pierced by a screwdriver, the artist appears oblivious to his own action and to the response of the passers-by or to any criminal implications. Alÿs casually walks the route, free to do so due to his status as outsider. The border guards do not approach him in order to question or stop the performance. They simply allow him to pass. No police are present, and no one queries the spilling of paint onto the road. In fact, one is left to question if anyone in the accidental audience really understands the context of the action. Although stimulating documentation of commentary from academics, activists and journalists is provided, there is no evidence of any responses from the people who witnessed the action as it occurred. From the video there appears to be no aggressive confrontation, nor is there any evidence

of a negotiation to perform the act. People look on, some in disbelief, some with indifference. We see Alÿs only occasionally make small gestures to his audience as he continues his task without stopping, except to refill the paint can. The video does not give the viewer an insight into the actuality of this event. If there was any confrontation, it has not been included in the final edit. Overall, the artist exhibits a certain 'removed' attitude. This detached manner is something that I strive to retain in some of my own interventions.[12] The action is not executed in any direct or aggressive fashion, the message and contexts are not forced, audience participation is not mandatory.

Alÿs attempts to question the 'relevance of a poetic act within a situation of a sustained political religious military crisis' (Agazarian & Alÿs, 2007). This poetic act 'helps break down a set of configurations of reality' (Hamami & Alÿs, 2007) and in doing so gives the artist a way in to question politics non-aggressively. The art historian Jean Fisher, in an interview with Alÿs, beautifully expresses the complexity between the poetic and the political:

> …for ages I've tried to get my head around it. How can one think of art as political without falling into the trap of propagandist/activist sort of strategies? Where does the poetic intersect with the political in a way that is not banal? So, I rejected all the activism of the seventies and eighties as being *not it*. For me, it's got to derive from the poetic gesture. It has to derive from the moment at which a gesture somehow illuminates, or gives you a sudden insight into a situation. Which isn't itself political, but has the potential to open onto a political thought. (Fisher & Alÿs, 2007)

Chantel Mouffe proposes that art practice is political in that it plays a significant role between challenging and maintaining a given social code. An aesthetics of the political is implicated in the symbolic ordering of social relations (Mouffe, 2013, p. 91). Alÿs' axiom

[12] For example, in *Prydeindod (The Walk)* (2015), in which I walked through Wrexham with a banner, adopting an attitude of remoteness. I discuss this work in further detail as part of *Artistic Inquiry: Flags*

Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic chimes with Mouffe's position. Art has a political dimension and politics has an aesthetic dimension (Mouffe, 2013). Alÿs is aware that the role of an artist is one of privilege in that society allows them 'poetic licence' (Alÿs, 2007). In this way, an artist has the freedom to do and say things that others cannot. This includes the performance of interventions that can appear meaningless or absurd. This ability to perform through poetic licence raises issues as to the role of the artist in a politicised society. Alÿs is concerned with the issues of how art practice can remain political without transforming into social activism or appearing too opinionated (Alÿs, 2007). This inquiry resonates with Mouffe's questioning of how artistic interventions generate novel modes of political identification through aesthetic and affective means (Mouffe, 2013, p. 97). Alÿs further complicates this by asking a series of questions about his practice. These include the following: can an artistic intervention initiate unanticipated ways of thinking? Can artistic interventions transform social tensions into narratives that mediate across dominant hegemonies and introduce alternatives to entrenched assumptions? Can an absurd act invoke the potential for transformation? (Alÿs, 2007). The line of paint that Alÿs creates on the ground makes his actions political (Alÿs, 2007). What this means is that Alÿs realises that by being on one side of the line, he is recognising one political opinion and by standing on the other, he positions himself as the opposition. Even by using the title *The Green Line*, Alÿs finds himself taking sides and, similar to the real green line, Alÿs' dripped line produces segregation. Alÿs is aware that it is impossible to perform a neutral action. By creating the line of paint in the dust, he is also forming a position. The performance offers a space of resistance and artistic critique of a political situation. However, I do not believe that Alÿs is advocating activism as art practice. Mouffe (2013) writes that it is a mistake to believe that artistic activism can

independently put an end to an existing hegemony (Mouffe, 2013, p. 93). Neither is Alÿs attempting to unveil hidden truth. As is true of the actual line, this *Green Line* is a negotiation line. It is a starting point for a dialogue about the production of territory and identity.

The act can be read as the artist's attempt to cut up and divide the landscape that they amble through. What we experience through Alÿs' walk is an awareness of the territory of division. This is especially true as Alÿs passes through the urban quarters of the route. Weizman observes that Israeli settlements tend to be on higher ground, giving them the advantage in terms of both military position and status. The Palestinian areas that Alÿs passes through tend to be situated on lower ground and more agricultural. This, Weizman advises, shows an ethical divide. For Weizman there is no neutral walk. Comparable to politicians or the military who constructed and designed such lines before him, Alÿs' project is 'requesting two kinds of spaces on two sides', and demanding 'difference between the right and the left side of the line' and in doing so is propagating difference (Weizman & Alÿs, 2007).

Alÿs' *Green Line* functions in what Mouffe describes as a multiplicity of social spaces (Mouffe, 2013, p. 87). Many of Alÿs' actions take place inside and outside of galleries and museums. As sites of hegemonic struggle, social space is 'where one aims at creating consensus' (Mouffe, 2013, p. 92). However, Mouffe is of the opinion that this consensus is not possible. The social space is therefore a site in which there is a confrontation of different attitudes but with the understanding that consensus will not be reached (Mouffe, 2013, p. 92). In many of the interviews that Alÿs conducted with historians, activists, architects and

journalists, who have experience of the green line, we find evidence of the complexity of both Alÿs' act and the nature of the border itself (Alÿs, 2007).

Finally, spatial practices such as those enacted by Alÿs can be interpreted as part of the ordering activities of place that include actions such as walking and viewing (Kaye, 2000, p. 5). A site-specific artwork is defined by drifts or leaks of meaning (Kaye, 2000, p. 57). It assesses the solidity and the limits of place as it acts out. However, doing so depends on the order of the site it disrupts. These sites are what Ernest Larsen, in his essay 'Ordinary Gestures of Resistance' (2000), describes as being areas of micro resistances (Larsen, 2000, p. 182). Like many other works by Alÿs, *The Green Line* is held between an act that is poetic and an act that is political. In presenting this work as poetic, it leans towards being farcical, simplistic and open to interpretation (Godfrey, 2010, p. 24). Godfrey (2010) questions the idea that a poetic work cannot have a political effect (Godfrey, 2010, p. 24). However, if understood as an act of the political then it could have an impact on the reality of negotiations, territory and the rights of Jerusalem.

Claiming Borders: Royal Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland

Since the project's inception in 1992, self-proclaimed kings of Elgaland-Vargaland, the Swedish art duo Carl Michael von Hausswolff and Leif Elggren, have worked to claim sovereignty over every type of border, including national, maritime and digital, but also those belonging to the psychological and the hypnagogic state between wakefulness and sleep. Through performance and installation, the Royal Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland, or KREV (KonungaRikena Elgaland-Vargaland), question the boundaries between art and non-art. The project exists within the realm of political action and seeks to playfully poke at hegemonic structures. By taking possession of no man's land and areas of unclaimed

territory, both in terms of the physical and psychological, KREV is a commentary on nationalism, citizenship, statehood and political power. The artists have set up embassies around the world including New York, Kaliningrad and Johannesburg. Annexing ceremonies have included musical performances of the KREV national anthem, speeches, sharing a meal of the national state food and drink, followed by opportunities to apply for citizenship.

In 2002, as part of the tenth anniversary of the state's existence, the artists, together with a number of their subjects, travelled from Stockholm to Tallinn in Estonia with only KREV passports. The group were held for a day by the Estonian authorities at the border and their KREV passports confiscated. However, after checks were performed with Swedish authorities, the artists and their subjects were released. The artists had intended to be rejected from the Swedish border and in doing so to reside on the border line of each country, therefore experiencing living in a physical manifestation of Elgaland-Vargaland. This scenario, however, did not occur as the group were accepted at the Swedish border and allowed back into the country.

My interest in this particular action is in its ability both to be absurd and to highlight the politics of identity and geography. The artists attempted to enter a physical manifestation of Elgaland-Vargaland, that is, the actual zone of in-betweenness. This situates their practice in critical dialogues of how borders operate both in terms of a line on a map and a geographical reality. A line that signifies a border is neither inside nor outside either territory. This makes any attempt to define where one country begins and the other ends futile. The line, however thin or thick it might be, is a vacuum that expands both vertically and horizontally between territories, and this is where the artists seek to claim their sovereignty.

Their success in achieving this aim was dependent on both the Estonian and Swedish border authorities rejecting the group's access to either country. I do not think that their expulsion from Estonia and acceptance back into Swedish territory rendered the action a failure. On the contrary, the impact of the action draws attention to the management strategies of political identification and border practices. Their release by the Estonian authorities was due to the artists' notoriety. Once this was explained to the Estonian authorities, the treatment of the group became less harsh. In this way, it chimes with Alÿs' statement that, unlike other professions in society, an artist is given poetic licence to act in ways that appear to be absurd and meaningless.[13]

KREV's action tests the limits of the border's existence as being on the outer edges of a state. Their performance exposes what Nick Vaughan-Williams, in his book *Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power* (2014), calls a 'relationship between the concept of borders of the state and our understanding of practices of sovereignty […] and power in contemporary political life' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 9). Vaughan-Williams considers how borders of the state must be understood in a more 'sophisticated conceptualisation' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 15). Borders and border practices need to be reconsidered in terms of operating in 'offshored, electronic and peripatetic' ways (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 165). Consider for example the concept of a biometric border, where there is the 'encoding of travellers before they move to enable the fixing of identities, classification according to perceived levels of risk, and filtration into legitimate/illegitimate flows of traffic' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 59). These types of 'portable border', together with

[13] Alÿs further examines this condition by setting up a series of questions that ask if artistic interventions can generate unanticipated ways of exposing the absurdity of a given situation. He also asks questions about how an artistic intervention can decipher social conflicts, and in what ways art can maintain political relevance and influence change (Alÿs, 2007).

other biopolitical border management models, are examples of what the Royal Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland seek to claim as their territory. As a concept, KREV acts similarly to the way that borders are understood by Vaughan-Williams in that they are not 'fixed static lines on maps' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 39), but act as '[p]ortable machines of sovereign power that are inseparable from the bodies they performatively produce and sort into different categories' (Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 39).

Crossing Borders: Into the Mystical Realms

Marcus Coates' art practice is concerned with showing us to ourselves from the perspective of a nonhuman (Coates, 2015). He does this by challenging the notion that we live in one reality. He journeys into his imagination, tapping into what he believes to be his unconscious knowledge in order to bring insight into how our culture is created and, if possible, how it can be improved. To explore these other realities, Coates appropriates methods equivalent to those of a shaman. He uses the idea of becoming animal, adorning himself with home-made costumes and imitating an array of animal sounds through which he is able to enter into 'other worlds'. These ritual-like performances often begin with a question set by his audience or client. Coates keeps this question in focus as he explores his visions. The knowledge that is brought into being from these events is gained through a process of what Coates terms unconscious reasoning (Coates, 2015). This process assists in widening our problem-solving skills using our imagination. It is how we utilise experiences and non-conscious information (Coates, Spira, & Horne, 2016). Coates is of the belief that truth and knowledge can be accessed by the imagination (Coates, 2015). By becoming animal Coates can see, act and say things that other members of society cannot. Like the shaman, Coates is given poetic licence in order to explore the socially focused potential of play, intuition and imagination. In the guise of an animal Coates can address contentious

issues and articulate concerns in non-threating ways. By becoming animal, Coates is able to examine what being human entails, both culturally and physically (Coates, 2014). Coates' work operates at the in-between of identity (Steiner, 2016, p. 16). He examines the liminal space of identity in order to view human culture from an alternative perspective.

The Plover's Wing (2008) was part of the Hapzura Arts Festival conceived by the Israeli Centre of Digital Art in association with Workspace Gallery in the UK. Wearing a blue Adidas tracksuit from which a dead rabbit emerges, together with mirrored glasses and a badger headpiece, Coates performed a ritual for the Mayor of Holon. The Mayor had posed a question concerned with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, specifically focused on improving education and alleviating the violence between young people. We then see Coates undertake his journey into the 'other worlds', imitating the physical actions and verbal sounds of a variety of animals. The Mayor and his interpreter's responses go between bemusement, intrigue and awkwardness. Externally, Coates' act can be viewed as shuttling between that which is humorous and uncomfortable viewing. As an audience member you cannot help but smile at his rather absurd actions. You feel uncomfortable for the Mayor and wonder if this type of performance might damage his reputation. However, Coates is at pains to stress that he takes these rituals incredibly serious. They are not intentionally humorous. Coates truly believes himself to inhabit the body of the animals he calls upon to assist him on his quest for an answer, as seen in his other work, such as *FinFolk* (2003), where he becomes a seal that attempts to mimic human behaviour, or *Journey to the Lower World* (2004), in which he dons a stag pelt and performs bird calls in front of a group of rather bemused residents of a high-rise tower scheduled for demolition. As Coates explains in an interview with Valerie Smith (2016), the humour in *The Plover's Wing* is unintended and appears from the inappropriateness of the setting. He is not consciously trying to be

funny in his works (Coates & Smith, 2016). His preferred stance is that of the pathetic. Coates uses this as a methodology, a way of 'emptying out – disregarding my own need to have status. This helps me to do things that I might not normally do and enables me to take risks because I'm unconcerned with how I'm being perceived' (Coates & Smith, 2016, p. 22). In this way, Coates can act in a way that general society is unable to do in the public space. He has found that this also prompts a feeling of trust and non-threat from his clients and audience. Coates sees his position in the historical contexts of the 'fool' and the primal. From the basis of the pathetic he can transcend himself and this world (Coates & Smith, 2016). I find Coates' use of the pathetic similar to my own approach to the term. It is the ability to take risks by becoming the fool or the naïve; to foster trust, but fringe this with an awkwardness. It is the willingness to transcend the real in order to project other imaginings into the world.

Coates reports his experiences in a non-judgemental way. He emerges from the other world into the office of the Mayor to recount his journey and the animals he has consulted with. Coates speaks of a plover whom he was attracted to. Although not familiar with this bird's language, Coates describes in detail its appearance and actions, describing how it appeared to have a broken wing and tried to move Coates away from its nesting area. Eventually the bird flew away, and Coates returned to the world. He then goes on to interpret the plover's actions, to find meanings in the experience. Coates reads the bird as adopting a victim position. However, this bird was not the victim at all. Because of the situation it found itself in, the bird's default position was to act in that way. He then presents this in relation to the question posed by the Mayor:

> I think in conflict situations especially – and this happens with young people, with old people, I think it happens with everybody. I think it happens with nations – it's easier

> sometimes to take on what is seemingly a victim position, because you are defending yourself. And from this position you can do very extreme things and feel you are in the right. (Coates, Spira, & Horne, 2016, p. 197)

Coates concludes that the youth must find empathy with other people's positions and other people's readings of the situation. He does not give any direct actions as to how to achieve this, leaving it open to further interpretation by the Mayor and the audience of the video.

The performance in Holon is typical of Coates' engagement with politics. Coates' decision to provide his services to issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be read as how serious he is in his belief that his specific use of the imagination can be an aid in helping to open up a space from which to reconsider contentious and volatile political situations.

Coates' methods have been well documented in terms of their comparison to the Deleuzian notion of becoming (Andrews, 2011; Aloi, 2011; Cull, 2012). Similar to the shaman, Coates claims the ability to cross between specific division lines. His skill in becoming animal acts as a distancing device from which to observe human behaviour. For Coates, the line between being animal and human is simply a negotiable threshold. Coates therefore crosses a performative border in order to examine real geographical and political border cultures.

Artistic Inquiry: BORDERS

Please click here for presentation of practice documentation for **Artistic Inquiry BORDERS**

In this artistic inquiry I will discuss two artworks, *Croeso I Gymru/Welcome to England* (2008) and *Guardians of the Border* (2016). Performed at locations between Wales and England, these works were created in direct response to my own perception of localised border issues. Together with furthering a theoretical framework, I will develop my inquiry into borders as sites for art interventions, situating the work within a broader discussion of border poetics (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007; Larsen, 2007); as sites of performance (Nield, 2006; Boal, 2008); Welsh identity (Thomas, 1973; Williams, 2005); antagonism (Bishop, 2004; Mouffe, 2013); and in the realms of the absurd and humorous (Esslin, 2004).

ESTABLISHING SITE: The Wales-England Border

'*The border region of Wales has formed me*' – This autobiographical statement initiated the research inquiry. How do I explore being a 'border dweller'? In what ways has my experience of being a 'border dweller' shaped the construction of my national and cultural identity? How can these internalised impressions of cultural and national identity be presented visually?

In a world where actions that take place at borders have a global significance and often have an immense impact on the lives of those escaping tyrannical forces, I would like to propose that a study of more benign and subtle border interactions, at a local level, and around a border not often regarded as such, might not only reveal the politics at play at a micro level but also resonate with these larger issues. The border between Wales and England may not be associated with explicitly aggressive visual representations of those powers that include

or exclude. No fence runs along its border; there are no checkpoints, no military presence. But, as David Storey has argued, there are specific ideologies, social practices and territorial strategies that are played out in order to maintain power relationships between each country (Storey, 2012, p. 213). Take for example the 'Croeso I Gymru' ('Welcome to Wales') signage that greets you on the major road systems into Wales. The preference for the Welsh language version of the greeting above rather than the English translation is significant in that it informs that you have crossed over into a different country, where another language is spoken, valued and given priority. This is an example of what David Delaney (2005) proposes when he observes that we live in a 'culture of signage' in which we constantly encounter 'makers of territory' (Delaney, 2005, p. 28).

Balibar (2002a) recognises that borders and marches have long been an integral part of empire building. The creation of territory has been a history of separation lines, blockades and zones of passage. Many attempts have been made to geographically define the borders of Wales, for example, Offa's Dyke. Wales has historically been considered as a colonial territory of England, a principality. For the Welsh, the border is both a geographical and psychological impediment. Welsh Historian Chris Williams (2005) calls for more attention to be focused on the geographical borderland as well as the affective borderland of Wales (Williams, 2005). He is of the belief that 'the border may offer a privileged angle of observation' (Williams, 2005, p. 13), that is, a place from which one can relate Wales to England.

I grew up in the county of Flintshire, situated on the estuary of the River Dee and very close to the Welsh/English border. This area of Wales has always found itself questioning notions of its identity. This is not surprising, as the majority of people living in this area tend to have

been born in England, due to the nearest hospital being in Chester. As Simon Gwyn Roberts (2005) has observed, identity markers, such as accent, birthplace, residence and ancestry in Flintshire, are quite fluid and ambiguous (Roberts, 2007). Roberts proposes that this fluidity produces a weaker sense of national identity compared to those who live across the border in England. People living in the north east area of Flintshire are not completely convinced of their status as Welsh, but nor do they opt for the label of 'British' as this is too closely associated with English characteristics (Storey, 2012, p. 133).

Another issue that compounds this is the use of the Welsh language. Flintshire is one of the most Anglicised parts of Wales, with Welsh speakers accounting for just 13.2% of its population (Flintshire County Council, 2015). Ned Thomas, in his book *The Welsh Extremist* (1973), states that the relationship between Welsh and English speakers in Wales is both psychologically fascinating and politically crucial, and yet remains largely unexplored (Thomas, 1973, p. 103). Thomas questions how far the Anglo-Welsh feel themselves to be Welsh (Thomas, 1973, p. 105).

These questions of mixed identity markers have been prevalent in my work. How can one describe a sense of identity at the Welsh border? If there is, as Roberts proposes, an ambiguity in terms of forming a sense of one's identity in this part of Wales, how as an artist could I make this visible?

Williams (2005) talks of a definition of Welshness through hybridity (Williams, 2005, p. 14). Many intellectuals and nationalists who define and endorse what constitutes Welsh identity markers often ignore the reality of what Williams calls the 'fuzzy borders'. Wales has a long history of multiculturalism. In fact, he observes that 590,000 people in Wales were born in England, making them the largest ethnic grouping in the country (Williams, 2005). For

Williams, identity in the singular is outmoded and now comprises ideas such as identity as multiple and situational. My practice has a concern for where fragmentation, the performative, multiplicity of self, allows for one's validity to emerge from one's own experience rather than that of a particular collective (Williams, 2005, p. 15). From this perspective, I am testing the ways that we construct a narrative of the self in order to fit into a unified identity (Williams, 2005, p. 15). By declining universalities of national claims for identity, my works might be interpreted as seeking out more fluid forms of union (Williams, 2005, p. 15).

Between the years 2006 and 2008, I embarked on what could be considered an autoethnographical examination of identity markers. As a 'border dweller' myself I was fascinated, and at times somewhat confused, as to what identity markers constituted my own sense of identity, particularly in terms of positioning myself as Anglo-Welsh or an English-speaking Welsh person. This research was conducted around Boundary Lane in Saltney, a small town of around 5000 inhabitants that quite literally straddles the border. In terms of its location, Boundary Lane is aptly named as the border divides the street, with one side being in the county of Cheshire and the other in Flintshire.

Croeso i Gymru/Welcome to England (2008) was an interventionist performance in which I greeted people crossing the border at Boundary Lane using either Welsh or English depending on which side of the street I stood on. The location of this performance at a pedestrian crossing was ideally situated, as this space not only controlled the flow of traffic but also the people crossing the border line. Ideas for this performance initially consisted of organising a carnival-type event, very much over-the-top in its presentation, which included music (perhaps a choir singing the Welsh anthem), dancers in Welsh national costume,

balloons and brightly coloured handmade signs. In the end, I decided on something understated.

The performance referenced the tradition of Augusto Boal's *Invisible Theatre* (Boal, 2008). The people who entered the frame of the performance were unaware of it being an act. Likewise, I did not reveal myself to be acting. Here, the border was a site of cultural and political encounter (Nield, 2006; Boal, 2008). I purposely situated myself in what was, in reality, a shifting position between power and vulnerability. Most of the people who encountered me at the border read the scene as me being someone wanting to conduct a survey of some kind. In this reading, there was a play of power present and I had a purpose for being there. Read within an alternative frame, my presence could be interpreted as that of a vocalisation of the greeting sign or, in a more exaggerated rendering, that of a border guard.

Territorially, my presence at the border was what Erving Goffman terms situational and temporal (Goffman, 1997, p. 45). My management of dress and vocal projection was intentionally passive. The performance lasted for only a short duration. For that time, the border crossing became a site of interruption, both physically and psychologically. The performance can be read through Goffman's 'Territories of Self', which includes *conversational preserve* and *information preserve*. *Conversational preserve* is concerned with the rights of a person to have power over who can engage them in conversation and at what point they can be beckoned, whereas *information preserve* is about how a person controls what information about themselves they wish to withhold or declare (Goffman, 1997). My presence was an intervention into other people's everyday routines, an

interruption at the border of what Goffman terms our *impression management* (Goffman, 1990).

In the performance I treated the act of greeting almost as if it were a question – *Croeso I Gymru*? The use of a clipboard added a layer of misreading into the act. Did the people I was greeting think I wanted to ask them a series of questions? In fact, with a tick-box questionnaire, I did use this opportunity to collect data on how they understood their identity as being English, Welsh, British or other. The video does not register this as it was edited for other purposes.[14] However, the very small number of responses I collected could never be viable in terms of true data gathering and evaluation due to the limited number of respondents.

Croeso I Gymru/Welcome to England was exhibited at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, in Cardiff (2008), to a largely Welsh-speaking audience. The work was exhibited in order to highlight and problematise identity both regarding the geographical border between the two countries and within the fenced territory of the National Eisteddfod[15] itself.

Williams (2005) observes that there is an affective borderland between the English and Welsh. Discussions of nationality often manifest a sense of 'othering'. Citing Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (1998), Williams reasons that this 'erects psychological barriers between people', and creates needless hostilities towards the other that 'render marginal or invisible those whose characteristics do not fit those of the imagined nation' (Williams, 2005, p. 16).

[14] The video was edited in order to be presented like a recording of a humorous event using an attitude similar to the type of secret camera formats used in television series such as *Trigger Happy TV* (Channel 4) or *Just for Laughs* (BBC).

[15] Lewis observes that the National Eisteddfod is a heterotopia in that it is a 'multidimensional event, and one that also represents many different spaces' (Lewis, 2018, p. 138).

Croeso I Gymru/Welcome to England functions at multiple levels, examining both geographical-political and psychological sites. It has a direct connection to those types of work labelled *relational* as it can only operate through the active participation of people. However, it does not attune to the utopian or convivial nature that Bourriaud (2002) promotes in his interpretation of socially engaged art practices. It has more in common with Bishop's relational antagonism in that it is disruptive and intrusive. Although the artist confronts the people in a rather mild way, they naturally take up a defensive position.

The piece highlights the complexities of how an artwork situated in the *relational* questions social consciousness, and how, in reaction to this, society attempts to define itself. The tension between the artists, the participant and the context is essential, as in this uncomfortable state we are asked to question a sense of self.

Artistic Inquiry: *Guardians of the Border* (2016)

Figure 5: Guardians of the Border (2016) Paul R Jones. Video Still. © Joey Edwards. All rights reserved.

Guardians of the Border (2016) shares similarities with *Croeso I Gymru*/*Welcome to England* in that it took place at a specific boundary point between England and Wales. Again, this performance acted as a disruption to the everyday. Like *Croeso I Gymru*/*Welcome to England*, the performance was situated at a traffic light crossing on the Welsh side of the bridge, emphasising ideas of access and control.

Guardians of the Border consisted of a skirmish between a knight and a dragon, with interjections from an eighties-style DJ and orchestrated by a director shouting flustered instructions through a megaphone. It was created in collaboration with students from Glyndŵr University studying on the BA (Hons) Fine Art course, on which I currently work as a full-time lecturer, and performed at Holt, North Wales on 27 February 2016.

The artwork was instigated by Oriel Wrexham Offsite Project team as part of a bigger initiative entitled *Place and Space*. At the time Oriel Wrexham was between sites, and this required them to be innovative in how they remained visible to an audience and continued to work with and promote artists in the local community and beyond. The Offsite Project was an important part of the Oriel Wrexham development plan as it aimed to situate the gallery, through social engagement, within community centres, youth centres and pop-up street events.

Holt lies north east of Wrexham. It is a small village on the border between Wales and England. The initial trigger to work at this location was the bridge that connects Holt to the village of Farndon in Cheshire. The bridge is of historical significance, having been erected in the 12th century and partly destroyed during the Civil War, and constituting the only means of access between the two villages. I found this idea of a limited access point fascinating. I could imagine it as a militarised zone.

Today, the bridge is simply part of everyday life, with traffic and villagers freely crossing without even considering that they are entering another country. These are issues that in everyday terms usually lie unregistered and dormant, the types of issues that the dominant consensus manages to maintain as opaque. My interest in the bridge also came from the ability to control encounters within a constricted space. The pavement that runs the length of the bridge is very narrow and to cross from one side to the other requires negotiation between those approaching from opposite ends. In terms of vehicle access, due to it being a single lane access, traffic lights are installed either side of the bridge. Yet, some evidence of friction remains. An example of this includes the contentious naming of the bridge. Those living on the English side call it Farndon Bridge, while those living on the Welsh side call it Holt Bridge.

Due to its territorial condition, this bridge acts as a type of palimpsest of time and space, like a heterotopia as discussed by Michel Foucault (1986). Foucault defines a heterotopia as that which collocates in a real place several incompatible sites or spaces. Heterotopias also operate in accretions of time. This is a form of heterochrony where the indeterminate amassing of time in a rigid place allows for transition and fluidity. In regard to the *Guardians of the Border* performance, Pearson and Shanks, in their book *Theatre/Archaeology: Disciplinary Dialogue* (2001) express this place/time manifestation distinctly as a

> friction between past and present and drawing attention to the temporality of place. And within such places, free from conventions of dramatic exposition, performance may be constituted as a locale of cultural intervention, as a temporary autonomous zone, as both heterotopia and utopia. (Pearson & Shanks, 2001, p. 111)

From the perspective of how power and opposition are present in the landscape, C. Ondine Chavoya, in his essay 'Internal Exiles' (2000), interprets a heterotopia as having the ability to activate progressive regimes of spatial resistances (Chavoya, 2000, p. 201).

The concept of the heterotopia is attractive to artists, like me, who are interested in the point at which a single site ruptures and fragments. It constitutes a point that Claire Doherty, in her introduction to *Situation* (2009), describes as being at the threshold and leads to multiples of space and place. The historical context of Holt Bridge acts as a site by which to create estrangement both in time and space.

The Performance

Figure 6: Guardians of the Border (2015) Paul R Jones. Video Still. © Joey Edwards. All rights reserved.

My script required the knight to approach from the English side of the bridge towards the rather anxious-looking dragon. The DJ followed behind the knight with the hymn 'Jerusalem'

playing loudly from a ghetto blaster. The dragon was instructed to stand on the Welsh side of the bridge, close to the 'Croeso I Gymru' signage, and await the arrival of the knight.

Once the knight reached the Welsh side, a short skirmish broke out, which included the dragon throwing leeks at the knight and the knight retaliating with a plastic toy sword. The 'director', who stood with the audience opposite the main performance area, quickly stopped this. At this point the DJ played 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' in order to bring strength to the dragon, who took on a series of power poses, arms outstretched, feet apart and waving to the audience, who returned their support with cheers. After a short time, the director instructed the DJ to sound an air horn for the first bout to begin. Jungle music blasted from the portable stereo unit.

Three attacks between the knight and dragon had been scripted. Two of these pushed the knight towards the English side of the bridge, with a final one driving the dragon back to the 'Croeso I Gymru' sign, where the knight finally defeated the dragon. Throughout the performance the director, seemingly perplexed by some of the antics of the actors, flustered his way through the script. Each battle was performed in a play fight manner, almost to the point of being pathetic. However, at times, due to the actors becoming carried away through excitement and the encouragement of the crowd, moments arose when their physical contact became rather more energised, with the potential of real aggression. The director, shouting instructions, attempted to moderate these interactions. The audience felt aware of these moments too. After the performance I spoke to the curator and audience member Steffan Jones-Hughes, who commented on the potential of real violence being 'in the air' at times.

To add to the comic effect, the performance was disrupted by a cordial 'timeout scene' in which the knight, dragon and DJ each drank fruit juice and exchanged pleasantries, although during these break times the knight acted as if he were suspicious of the dragon, removing his sword from the dragon's reach and looking over to the crowd as if to survey whether they had similar mistrusts. This scene was done with both the knight and dragon not wearing their headpieces. They had become 'human', and, in so doing, closer to the audience. The actors revealed themselves but at the same time still performed.

From my observations on the day, although the performance was, at one level, easily understood by the audience, who found it amusing and entertaining, the element of antagonism was not lost on them. At the end of the act, an audience member was heard to cry: 'A Welsh dragon being slain on Welsh soil, it would never happen!' However, it did, with the knight making a spectacular exhibition of victory over the defeated dragon. Much ludic booing and hissing from the audience followed. The performance ended with the knight walking back across the bridge to England followed by the DJ, who played the 1977 Sex Pistols track 'God Save the Queen' through his ghetto blaster.

The performance references Mummers' plays and Welsh Interludes. The Mummers' plays were commonly re-enactments of the folklore of St George and the Dragon. In these plays each character would give a speech, introduce their origins and narrate their actions. Traditionally these plays would symbolise the fight between good and evil, but also deliberate on concepts of duality and resurrection, with the inclusion of the character of the Doctor, who has the power to resuscitate the dead. In *Guardians of the Border*, the knight and dragon characters remain, but the doctor character is replaced by a 1980s-style DJ, who acted more like a prankster and worked to maintain the energies between the other actors

and the audience. The performance departs from the Mummers' plays in the fact that in the end there is no resurrection. The dragon was slain on the Welsh side of the border, and the knight returned triumphantly to the English side.

The Welsh Interludes or *Anterliwtau*, written by Welsh poet Thomas Edwards (1739-1810), known more famously by his pen name Twm o'r Nant, were performed around his home country of Denbighshire. Full of comical interactions and absurdity, they played on Welsh and English stereotypes. Like the Mummers' plays, the Anterliwt was a social performance, usually enacted by two or three players, and moralistic and satirical in nature. Incredibly popular, these plays brought notoriety and wealth for Edwards, so much so that in his book about his journeys across Wales, George Borrow devoted two chapters to this extraordinary poet, and his notorious Interludes (Borrow, 1862/1907). The Anterliwt is significant for this discussion as it was established at the north east border of Wales, where the *Guardians of the Border* was enacted. Perhaps in some way, the creating of such a work is evidence of a residual memory being enacted in the area these plays were once performed.

Sounds of Antagonism

The music for the performance was selected so as to propagate national pride. Although not a national anthem, 'Jerusalem' is seen by some English people as a preferred alternative for an English anthem to 'God Save the Queen'. With words by William Blake and musical composition by Sir Hubert Parry (1916), this 'hymn' is often sung on St George's Day and at international cricket games.

In deciding to use the Sex Pistols' version of 'God Save the Queen' the aim was to emphasise the subversive nature of the performance. The song had originally been released in 1977, the Silver Jubilee year of Queen Elizabeth II. This controversial track questioned the position

of monarchy and acted as a mirror to the state of the British psyche at that time – 'God save the queen, She ain't no human being, There is no future, In England's dreaming' (Matlock, Lydon, Cook, & Jones, 1977).

During the fight sequence, the DJ played two jungle music tracks: Cutty Ranks' 'Limb by Limb' (DJ SS remix) and 'The Way' by DJ Tattik. These tracks had been selected because of their link to the Channel 4 comedy series *Father Ted*. In 'New Jack City', episode nine of series two (1996), Father Fintan Stack, a rather intolerable and intimidating priest, antagonises the main characters with his unsocial and loud playing of the two tracks during his temporary residency with them. Jungle music, with its intense, fast tempo and breakbeats, was, during the early 1990s, the sound of the urban marginalised, an underground music genre that was a response to the post-Thatcherite deteriorating social configuration. The high-octane energy of this music, together with its association with an alienated sector of society, assisted in maintaining the excitement of the over-the-top stage fight and the political frameworks in which the performance functioned.

Guardians of the Border as Absurd, Humorous and Cultural Antagonisms

> Perhaps because of its ridiculous or absurd quality, an artistic action becomes excusable, and sometimes it can make its way through unlikely situations because it simply cannot be taken seriously. Humour – or a humorous dimension – often allows you to bypass situations that would not otherwise be allowed to happen if I had taken, for instance, a militant attitude.
>
> (Francis Alÿs in Dezeuze, 2009, p. 4)

I will consider how absurdity and humour have played a part in the development, production and reception of *Guardians of the Border*. My discussion will also include examining the links between the absurd and contemporary art practice.

Martin Esslin, in his influential *The Theatre of the Absurd* (first published 1961), describes the absurd as a sense of 'loss at the disappearance of ultimate certainties' (Esslin, 2004, p. 400). For philosopher Thomas Nagel (1971), the absurd manifests itself in situations that present a noticeable friction 'between pretention or aspiration and reality' (Nagel, 1971, p. 718). It is the space where seriousness and the possibility of everything that we take as significant or important is recognised as irrational, simply open to chance and doubt (Nagel, 1971). Nagel points out that in what could be considered ordinary life, our criteria for judging if something is absurd is through having already in mind that which is serious and important by which to differentiate that which is absurd (Nagel, 1971, p. 722). For Nagel, the absurd is where we can glimpse the authenticity of a scenario (Nagel, 1971, p. 727). It can be described as the method by which we are able to reveal 'reality', which by its very own definition is irrational. For Esslin, the absurd reveals reality through 'actions that lack apparent motivation, characters that are in constant flux, and often happenings that are outside the realm of rational experience' (Esslin, 2004, p. 416)

Esslin proposes that the 'challenge is to make sense of what appears as a senseless and fragmented action' (Esslin, 2004, p. 414). By confronting anxieties one can be freed from them and produce 'liberating laughter' (Esslin, 2004, p. 414). An audience can often respond to situations that they find bewildering with laughter. In his essay 'Absurdity, Incongruity and Laughter', Bob Plant (2009) states that laughter is a fitting reaction to the 'absurd tension between human aspiration and disappointment' (Plant, 2009, p. 115). But laughter also works at the level of what Henri Bergson calls 'social signification' (Bergson, 1900), where its importance is due to its capacity to be shared.

Philosophers from Plato to Hobbes have observed that humour can abuse and subvert dominant hegemonies. It has the power to liberate or be used as a political tool towards what Kristine Stiles describes as 'serious social consequences' (Stiles, 2007, p. 56). Humour has the ability to 'reflect upon the human condition' and to challenge authority (Higgie, 2007, p. 16).

Dada, Duchamp, Futurism, Surrealism and Fluxus have explored how art practice can play with humour, contrasting ideas, creating perplexity, puzzlement, illumination and awareness. In many ways, humour and the absurd bring into focus that which is hidden in everyday life. Through behaviours that can appear offbeat and awkward to incongruous and ignorant, humour 'relies on the gesture of unveiling' (Zizek, 2007, p. 219). Higgie (2007) also examines this process of revealing and unveiling:

> [Humour] has been employed to activate certain repressed impulses, embody alienation or displacement, disrupt convention, and to explore power relations in terms of gender, sexuality, class, taste, or racial and cultural identities. (Higgie, 2007, p. 12)

By applying strategies of irrationality and surrealism, *Guardians of the Border* aimed to open up a field of inquiry into potentially politically charged issues. The use of humour acted as a way of entering this discussion without being overly aggressive or obvious. This comic act that initially induced laughter was intended to instigate conversations that would probe deeper meanings as identified by the appropriation of characters and site-specificity.

Viewed at a superficial level, *Guardians of the Border* appears simply as a jovial, slightly Pythonesque farce. There is no denying a sense of the convivial, but I want to propose that this performance was complicated by political undertones. I was quite prepared for the performance to have appeared as an 'illogical event' (Bracewell, 2007, p. 150), something

comical or absurd. However, as the actions developed my hope was for the audience to become more aware of its political implications. This included an attempt to suggest aspects of historical colonialism, identity politics and cultural antagonisms.

Although the performance was not concerned with conveying information or presenting an accurate re-enactment from history, it did not however completely detach itself from the realms of questioning social and political behaviours. When considering its site-specific nature and its use of rather dubious cultural representations, including national anthems, red dragons, leeks and knights, what emerges is a number of more troublesome and dissonant questions. The performance did not aim to expose a contrived reality and replace it with something 'true'. It created a space from which to interrogate dormant ideas of identity and territory at that site, alluding to the historical colonisation of Wales by the English.

I am fascinated by the idea of rendering identity precarious, particularly in reference to my own Anglo-Welsh identity. The connection between heterotopic friction and Bishop's relational antagonism lay in the artwork's capacity to generate a reaction of awkwardness, creating and maintaining a tension between the performance, audience and the context.

For this project, my role was as *producer of events* (Bishop, 2012). I worked collaboratively with students, curators and other artists to create the piece. Rather than being labelled as the Artist who had full authority over the performance, the collaborative approach to making the work ensured that there was an openness and sense of equality in terms of determining how the performance took shape. The performers were given minimal direction and allowed to create their movements through dialogues with each other and myself. Spontaneity was encouraged as this would provide and maintain a certain visceral

energy and unpredictability during the event. My own role in the performance, that of the director shouting orders from the sideline of the main performance frame, was often ignored as the performers' excitement got the better of them. All this was in keeping with the performance structure of the Mummers' plays and Welsh Interludes, which, although scripted, encouraged a space of mischief and audience interaction. Much of this interaction during the *Guardians of the Border* performance took the form of the audience cheering, booing and yelling general banter. The breaking of the 'fourth wall' allowed the audience to interact with the characters and become part of the performance itself.

Opening up the Border

This chapter explored how the border can be used as a medium in art practice, with a focus on its performative dimension. As a stage for actors and as a theatrical setting, the art practice generated narratives (Nield, 2006; Larsen, 2007; Schimanski & Wolfe, 2007) and these narratives emerge as a response to the affective dimension of the border (Williams, 2005).

The artworks discussed test ways of how the narrative of cultural identity is constructed (Larsen, 2007). *Guardians of the Border* took as its starting point the mythical (St George and the Dragon) and historical (the Mummers' play and the Anterliwt) aspects of Welsh/English identity, which included the unpacking and amplifying of my own perception of cultural identity. This site-specific border performance provocatively exposed my position of national and cultural beliefs to the audience. On the subject of site-specific performance, Tompkins writes about the importance of 'exploring locations that have the capacity for a heterotopic relationship with community' (Tompkins, 2014, p. 40). The location selected for example for *Guardians of the Border,* I would assert, was charged with layers of real and

imagined heterotopic frictions. That is, the site was already loaded with cultural, historic, social and political antagonisms. Tompkins' approach to reconsidering theatre and site-specific performance connects with my model of heterotopic frictions when deployed in the artistic practice, where imagined and actual spaces overlap and rub up against one another. This clashing of worlds has the potential to contextualise, reimagine or have a long-lasting effect on the socio-political and cultural. Heterotopias do not 'simply exist in the delineation of […] alternative space', Tompkins writes, 'rather, their power is derived from being read *against* a context of a real or actual world' (Tompkins, 2014, p. 25).

The processes of demarcation, dividing lines, and the concepts of *them* and *us* have been part of everyday life for me as I grew up close to a border. A culture of signage (Storey, 2012) and division lines have been, for most of my life, a mundane presence. Yet, these markers of territory and identity have acted as catalysts for themes and questions from which many of my artworks originate. I recognise the 'fuzzy border' of Wales and England (Williams, 2005), with its ambiguities and absurdities, as a medium to use in order to examine my problematised identity.

At the beginning of this artistic inquiry into borders, I asked myself questions around how I could describe the concept of identity at the Welsh border and how, as an artist, I could make visible any ambiguity of identity at the border. The questions aimed to examine the complexities surrounding the instability of cultural identity in terms of what social and political behaviours are embedded at a border region. By way of a response, I define myself as a 'border dweller' who understands what Goffman describes as the 'territory of self' as deeply connected to place. To describe myself as a boundary dweller, to identify myself as such, means that I see my identity as fluid and ambiguous. Am I satisfied to fully claim

myself as neither Welsh nor British? Have I not rendered my identity precarious? Does this mean, declaring myself a border dweller, I am always in a process of becoming (Rogoff, 2000)?

CHAPTER 2: Testing the Parameters: Flags as Visual Displays of Territorial Control and as Cultural Identity Markers

Flags are a universal apparatus that act as a symbolic system. They are effective communicators of territorial power and can either fortify or dislocate a people's sense of national identity. They also have the ability to solidify a nation's belief system whilst remaining ambiguous. Their adaptability to take on a double function has rendered them both an indicator of belonging, to be embraced, or of alienation, to be feared. In this chapter, I review the historical and theoretical contexts of flags. I examine how flags and banners have been appropriated by artists as a medium and further scrutinise how flags function within my art practice, discussing the use of this powerful device to visualise, challenge and provoke alternative readings of the relationship between identity and territory.

A Brief Historical Overview of Flags

In his study *National Heterologies: On the Materiality and Mediality of Flags—Mali 2013* (2014), Holert looks at the historical emergence of flags. He distinguishes between banners, which are bespoke and made from fine materials upon which would be painted or embroidered the colours and motifs of an army's cohort, and flags, which are made in order to be exchangeable vehicles of iconography that would be transmittable across large expanses of territory (Holert, 2014). Historically, flags have been associated with the military and merchant navy (Grimnes, 2007)**,** an example of which can be found in the use of *vexilloids* by the Roman military. This consisted of a solid object, often representing an animal, fixed to the top of a pole. In the essay 'The Origin of European National Flags' (2007), Gabriella Elgenius writes that often a *vexilloid* was used to indicate particular

military units or communicate that people of high rank were present (Elgenius, 2007, p. 15). These totems may also have included cloth flags with emblems such as suns or stars, or animals, for example, an eagle (Elgenius, 2007, p. 16)**.** From around 3000 BC, the fabric flag emerged in China. Usually these were large, colourful flags and mainly used for the purpose of military display, their colours referencing religious or philosophical concepts. The flags that emerged throughout the Arab world greatly influenced the tradition of flag design. These flags used abstract patterns and inscriptions that were applied through appliqué, embroidery or painting, often representing leaders or dynasties (Elgenius, 2007, p. 17)**.** Fixed historically through a series of rules and heraldic tradition, national flags tend to be modular, in that they are either rectangular or square and have horizontal and vertical colour schemes (Neumann, 2007, p. 173). Tricolours, crosses and designs of heraldic descent are the most common flag arrangements (Elgenius, 2007, p. 28). Elgenius observes that a flag such as the one used by the English harks back to when a cross symbolised the 'holy mission of Christianity, against non-Christians' (Elgenius, 2007, p. 26). Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, such as in the case of the Nepali Flag that is pennant-shaped. Rectangular flags are a consequence of European colonialism. In 'Flags, Nation and Symbolism in Europe and America' (2007), Iver B. Neumann traces how the design of pennant-shaped flags in parts of Africa later became rectangular through the influence of the Europeans flags (Neumann, 2007, p. 173).

Flags as Symbols

Viewed as part of material culture, flags assert as well as flaunt national identities. In his essay 'Some Questions About Flags' (2007), Eriksen describes a flag as a symbolic container, a key symbol which acts as a totem that 'signifies a shared identity, mutual obligations and certain exclusive norms' (Eriksen, 2007, p. 3), whilst Jarman, in 'Pride and Possession,

Display and Destruction' (2007), observes that flags can be read as part of a nation's system of symbols (Jarman, 2007, p. 89). When flown from public buildings, flags assist in defining and asserting a political identity and a culture.

As markers of identity, flags are associated with national communities. Elgenius (2007) examines the development of modern flags in parallel to the progress of nation building. For Elgenius, the flag is the main device by which a nation state presents itself to the world, being one of the most powerful symbols that nations have in order to feel homogeneous. They are a common symbol that defines a people (Elgenius, 2007, p. 15). A nation relies on this 'shared medium' (Elgenius, 2007, p. 26) in order to symbolise independence.

The concept, power and command of flags have expanded beyond the realms of sovereignty into the mundane and corporate worlds, where it is accepted that global organisations fly a standard. Today flags also appear as a democratised symbol, even as part of the body: take for example those who tattoo their nation's standard onto their skin (Neumann, 2007, p. 174). Flags can appear on various domesticated objects such as posters, doormats, tea towels and even underwear. As Neumann observes, flags are the closest thing that we have to a pure multi-modal symbol, a symbol that means all things to all people, at all times and in all places (Neumann, 2007, p. 174). However, flags are also under constant negotiation. This is a significant proposition, especially in regard to this chapter's exploration of the adaptability of flags as a medium in artistic practice.

Nationalism

I want to expand this reading of the literature to discuss flags within the context of nationalism. This is valuable in terms of questioning how flags operate as authoritative and ritualistic apparatuses used by a nation to present itself to themselves and others, as later I will interrogate how this can be subverted within visual art practices.

A flag's presence and significance are important factors in defining nationalism (Eriksen, 2007; Neumann, 2007; Elgenius, 2007; Groom, 2007). Flags shape the way that groups and nations see themselves in terms of their similarity, sense of place and heritage. A nation will use various devices in order to communicate its differences from other societies. These include language, history, politics and religion (Elgenius, 2007, p. 14). Communities need to maintain links to a global sense of being through symbols that emphasise power, whether they be cultural, religious, ethnic, regional or national (Eriksen, 2007, p. 1). Here flags function as powerful vehicles that reflect and communicate the nation's ideals. Shaped through monumental events, flags represent the political situation of a nation. Revolutions, occupation, independence and unions, Elgenius observes, are often linked to the evolution of flags (Elgenius, 2007, p. 27). It is after such renegotiations of nationhood that changes in national symbolism often take place (Elgenius, 2007, p. 28).

UK Nationalism

In his essay 'Union Jacks and Union Jills' (2007), Groom quotes the American poet T.S. Eliot, who observes that the period of patriotism during the Second World War, where there was much exhibiting and waving of the Union flag, could never be sustained. Eliot warned that the exhibiting of the nation as 'one people under one banner' could be detrimental to the diversity of the UK, with the issue being that the Scottish, Welsh and Irish would become indistinguishable from the English (Groom, 2007, p. 68). Groom argues that what really happened was a corrosion of the British identity, as nations within the UK began to stress their own sense of unique identity. Responding to this, the Festival of Britain in 1951 attempted to 'promote cultural and national homogeneity' (Groom, 2007, p. 68). But this celebration was biased as it promoted a Christian Britain of more English traits (Groom, 2007, p. 69). Groom identifies the flags of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland as being

those symbolising another Britishness (Groom, 2007, p. 79). The Welsh flag, with its distinctive red dragon (Y Ddraig Goch), asserted its individualism, being the only flag of the UK that contains an animal, be that a mythical one. From 1959 the red dragon was granted official status.

Groom reminds us that there is a growing reluctance to engage in displays of patriotism in any meaningful way (Groom, 2007, p. 86). This refusal, Groom believes, presents a 'real possibility that the Union might disintegrate' (Groom, 2007, p. 86). Today the various nations that make up what we consider as the UK all assert their own sense of an independent identity. Each have considered how they are represented in terms of visual devices such as flags (Groom, 2007, p. 83). Flags can co-exist together but often friction arises as multiple identities endeavour to make their presence felt. As Eriksen states, '[f]lags naturally divide, or rather come to signify divisions as well as the unity of a nation' (Eriksen, 2007, p. 7).

Heterotopic Flags

Drawing on Foucault (1986), Holert argues that flags exist within multiple 'image spaces'. Here a flag can be viewed as an agent for emotional manipulation or political motivation. Within these contexts the flag preforms a heterological and heterotopic function (Holert, 2014, p. 3). By taking each principle and relating it to flags, the following can be observed:

- Principle one – flags are present in many cultures and exist in diverse forms. They act as markers that define territorial boundaries.
- Principle two – the meaning of a flag can be modified over time, operating differently in response to societal and historical shifts.

- Principle three – a flag can contain multiple different meanings at once. Eriksen puts forward the argument that a flag needs to be 'as empty a vessel as possible' so that it can be filled by many meanings, whether these be political, ethnic or religious (Eriksen, 2007, p. 5).
- Principle four – Flags can be oriented towards the temporal, for example, often appearing within festivals like a sort of 'immediate knowledge' (Foucault, 1986, p. 7), to remind a people they are bound by nationhood. Within such time-based celebrations flags are activated as heterochronic devices to facilitate origin narratives, to accentuate a feeling of stability and order.
- Principle five – flags can operate simultaneously as markers of accessibility and inaccessibility. They can give the illusion of being open and penetrable, but also excluding and isolating.

Holert develops his argument by not focusing on the obvious symbolic power of flags, but rather on their ability to remain ambiguous. If considered through this reading, flags are open to paradoxical renderings and manipulations. They can be used to turn against the very nation they signify.

Materiality and Medium

Flags are manufactured and essentially material. They are in essence a piece of hardware (Holert, 2014, p. 3). The materiality of flags can range from sewn fabrics flown from poles but can also exist in digital forms such as JPEGs or GIFs. Perceived in this way, flags are a device accessible across a range of different media. In his essay, Holert asks not only how flags function as a symbol but also how they operate as a medium. In this way, a flag can act as a readymade that is predisposed to 'media dissemination and exploitation' (Holert, 2014,

p. 6)**.** This plasticity can have both positive and negative implications.[16] The diverse potential of flags makes them valuable to opposing factions who attempt to monopolise them for their specific purpose (Eriksen, 2007, p. 7), as when they are adopted by terrorist organisations or activist groups, who recognise the significance of a flag's double function as a symbol. Here flags can be used to strike fear or as visual devices for mass-media presence. As both a concrete thing and an abstract symbol, Holert interprets flags as a *medium*, which is assimilated into other situations and actions. I will now examine how artists on the global stage appropriate flags and visualise their potency as a medium.

Situating Art Practice

In this section, I engage in situating the use of flags and banners within the context of established artistic practice. The aim is to link theoretical readings to established practical outcomes and assist in situating the application of flags and banners in my artistic inquiry.

Assertive Territoriality

For Papastergiadis, in his text 'Spatial Aesthetics: Art, Place and the Everyday' (2006), flags act as boundary markers (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 112). Flags can often mark border zones. Through this type of display, there is no mistake as to which territory you are in (Eriksen, 2007, p. 5). As with physical borders, where there can be no ambiguity in terms of being an insider or an outsider, the flag should assert to which side you belong. In such contexts, the flag is an authoritative apparatus (Eriksen, 2007, p. 6). As signals, flags distinguish between the conqueror and the conquered. They act as a call to arms and galvanise nationhood. They also expose the dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion. Papastergiadis describes the act of

[16] They are consistently utilised as part of semi-subversive identities – for example, in their appropriation as fashion, as in the mod culture of the 1960s and Britpop in the 1990s.

erecting a flag in the earth as part of the mythology of empire building (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 113)**.** This relationship between ground and the symbol exposes the 'central ritual [form] for expressing control and domination' (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 113). Papastergiadis describes a flag's ability to communicate at a distance. They can intimidate, assure, welcome or provoke from afar, beyond the reaches of verbal declarations. Flags have the power to convey a sense of belonging that goes beyond time. Their placement at specific locations can signify remembrance of a people, or act as a memorial of territory lost (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 113). Israeli artist Yael Bartana filmed *A Declaration* (2006) on the invisible border line between Tel Aviv and Jaffa. In this film, we see a man row a boat transporting an olive tree to Andromeda's Rock in Jaffa. The man replaces the Israeli flag usually positioned on this rock with the olive tree. Interpreted as symbols of peace since biblical times, olive trees are also an important part of West Bank agriculture. There is a history of uprooting olive trees bordering Zionist settlements, an act that, according to Galit Eilat, aims to destabilise Palestinian livelihoods (Eilat, 2008, p. 93)**.** In this work, the olive tree (one symbol of identity) replaces the flag (another symbol of identity). Both symbols express a people's sameness among themselves and difference to others. Bartana's work highlights the role of the flag and the olive tree in reflecting and communicating the conflicting ideals of a nation. Bartana utilises a number of strategies that revolve around extracting the historical and drawing out its complexities by relocating it in the present. Her early work in video and film concentrated on small events and everyday rituals. Usually short in duration and specific to ideologies regarding present-day Israel, these pieces had the appearance of an anthropological study. Flags reappear in Bartana's trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007-2011), which tells of the events concerned with the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP), now a political movement, which demanded the

return of three million Jews to Poland. With its focus on notions of nationalism within Europe and the Middle East, Bartana's flags function as symbols of nation building. Bartana's work identifies the importance of flags in the process of nation building, creating a common, shared symbol that defines a people. Bartana creates a world that is suffused with allegorical postulations that register contemporary political situations. In the *And Europe Will Be Stunned* trilogy, Bartana examines the relationships between the social, political and geographical. The work operates in a space where notions of utopias and multinational communities are interrogated.

This use of flags as nation building can also be found in the work of Larrisa Sansour. In her 2009 video piece *A Space Exodus,* Sansour inserts the Palestinian flag firmly on the moon's surface. The flag represents territory, sovereignty and a people observed from a distance. Tawil-Souri interprets the moon as possibly standing in for a new Palestine, that is, a land devoid of people for a people increasingly with no land (Tawil-Souri, 2011)**.** In Sansour's piece there is a direct link to Papastergiadis' notion of a flag's ability to communicate from a distance. In the video we see a female astronaut plant the Palestinian flag into the surface of the moon, in a similar fashion to the Apollo moon landing missions. Within this context, the work is suggestive of American intentions for space exploration, that is, a colonial domination of extra-terrestrial territories.

Flags as Symbolic Containers

The success of a flag depends on its ability to be a symbolic container ready to be filled with meaning, depending on who manages its presentation (Eriksen, 2007)**.** *The Impossible Walk* (2008), by the 'corporation' Das Beckwerk, is part of the work *The Parliament of Afghanistan*. Carrying *The Flag of the New*, the artist Claus Beck-Nielsen walked from the

outskirts of Kabul, through the city centre to the National Theatre. The white flag, which had a hole cut from its centre, was to symbolise friendship and peace. It is interesting to note that flags with holes cut out of them are often associated with uprising or rebellion, as in the 1989 Romanian revolution flag. Unbeknownst to Beck-Nielsen, the white flag in this region was synonymous not with peace but with the Taliban. This made the walk highly volatile. Beck-Nielsen distinctly describes the apprehensive reactions to the flag he received from officials from the Ministry of Information and Culture:

> …they said, – that flag, there is a hole in it! Something is missing! You have to fill in the missing symbol, what does it mean? – It means Dialogue and Peace! said the director. – Then you must write this on the flag, so that every Afghan will know the meaning of the flag! – But it is a symbol, I said, – a flag is a symbol, you don't write the meaning of a symbol onto the symbol, because then it is no longer a symbol! I said. They didn't answer. I guess they never heard me.
>
> (Beck-Nielsen, 2008)

In Das Beckwerk's walk, *The Flag of the New* remains a symbolic container, an empty vessel needing to be instilled with context.

From the Political to the Mundane

Francis Alÿs, responding to the controversy of the 2006 Mexican presidential elections that included alleged irregularities such as vote buying, illegal campaigning and recounts, conducted a walk through the streets of his neighbourhood in Mexico City with a knotted flag. Unbeknownst to the artist at the time, in nautical terms to tie a flag into a knot or 'wheft' symbolises a state of emergency. The flag is again utilised by Alÿs in his work *Zócalo* (1999), this time, however, observed through mundane actions. In the 12-hour film we follow the raising of the colossal flag in Zócalo Square, Mexico City, at dawn, and the course of the flagpole's shadow throughout the duration of the day. We are witness to the employment of the shadow as a provider of shade to the people who linger in the square

and seek shelter from the heat of the sun. This work is an example of Alÿs' fascination with 'social encounters that provoke sculptural situations' (Medina, 2010, p. 100).

Banners: From the Global to the Local

In terms of their descriptions in the study of vexillology, although interchangeable in most regards, there are some differences between flags and banners. Flags are abstract representations, usually square or rectangular, constructed of coloured bands and geometric shapes. Sometimes they use recognisable imagery, such as a dragon or bird, designed with a hoist side so that they can be attached to a flagpole using rope and toggle. Banners are generally more versatile. They can vary in shape and size, and are designed to attach either vertically or horizontally to a number of different hanging devices. They often contain text, which can make their meaning immediate and concrete. They are not abstract in the same way that flags are. Today, banners and flags have been appropriated for commercial advertising. Filippo Minnelli's use of banners examines their significance for a people to question identity and globalisation. Designed through dialogue and handmade in the locality where the performances took place, the banners functioned as autobiographical totems allowing them to connect with other places in the world. In Minnelli's work, flags are used to form a narrative and make connections across the globe, whereas Matthew Buckingham's film *Unzufrieden* (2006) is an example of an informal and domestic use of banners. Casually hung from a window ledge, the banner gently flutters, left to go noticed or unnoticed by those who pass by. Sharing much in common with Alÿs' work in that it operates within the site of everyday activity, Buckingham's work is subtle, operating at a micro level of protest.

Artistic Inquiry: FLAGS

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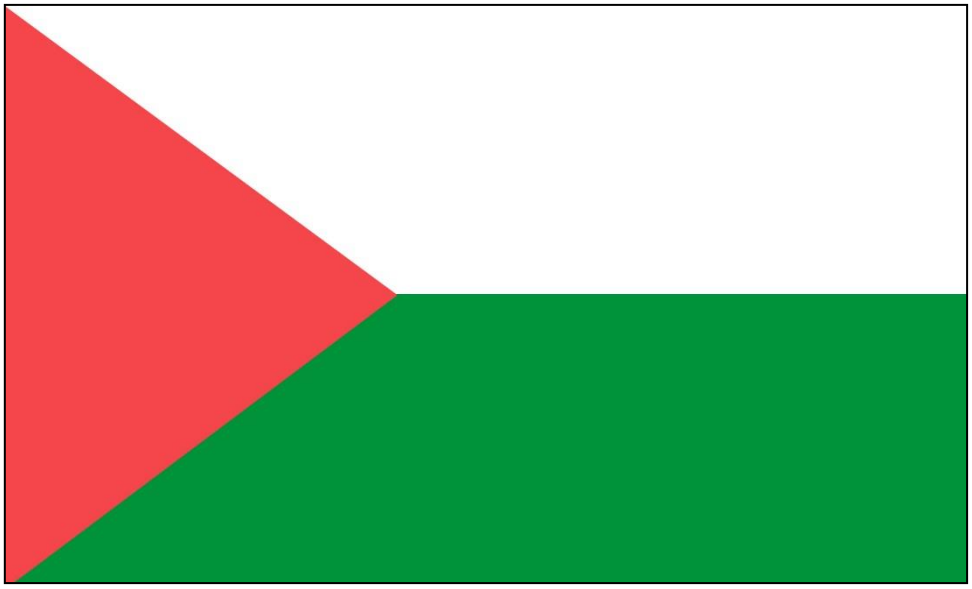

Figure 7: Baner Llecynnau.

There are a number of works in my portfolio that appropriate and subvert the symbolism of flags. These include *Under the Welsh Flag*, exhibited at the Whitworth Art Gallery and Museum, Manchester, in 2010; *Oraculum Petere* and *In Provinciam Proficisci* (2011-2012) that formed part of the group exhibition *Autobiography of a Supertramp*, 2012, at g39, Cardiff; *And on to Kinder Scout* (2013), shown in Airspace Gallery, Stoke on Trent, 2014. For this particular artistic inquiry, I focus on two investigations that further examine flags and banners as visual devices in relation to identity and territory. All these artworks use the fictional flag that I call the *Baner Llecynnau*. It is approximately 137 cm in length by 69 cm wide. This is the standard dimension of flags that I make. The design on the flag incorporates the colours and structure of the Welsh National Flag. On the flagstaff side (or what is known as the obverse side in vexillology), a red chevron reaches out towards the centre of the flag. The top section of the flag is white and the bottom section green.

Together with being informed by the Welsh flag, the design references the flag of the Czech Republic, Palestine, the Philippine Revolution and the Brunei Republican Rebellion. *Baner Llecynnau* was intended to perform as a symbol of a fictional country. It has been used extensively with the *Expedition Assignment*, an ongoing assignment that is influenced by cinema, painting and advertising. It exists both in a material sense and within the digital realm (Horlet, 2014), such as in the artwork *Rendition (Eryr Wen)* (2016), which I will discuss in a later chapter. The *Expedition Assignment* exists as a series of photographs and video pieces, of which *Oraculum Petere* and *In Provinciam Proficisci* (2011-2012) are part. I intended each of these artworks to act as short vignettes, hinting at a larger narrative.

Figure 8: In Provinciam Proficisci (2011-2012). Paul R Jones. Photo. © Paul R Jones. All rights reserved.

The large-scale digital print of *In Provinciam Proficisci* presents the viewer with a frontier landscape. We stand behind the figure, who, with their back to us, is reminiscent of paintings by Casper David Friedrich, whose depiction of single figures, or Rückenfigur, in vast landscapes was a great influence on the piece. In this immersive space the figure takes on

the role of a pioneer or colonialist with flag held high. Together with the central figure, the viewer surveys from an elevated viewpoint a possible *promised land*. This landscape is a combination of undulating hills and woodland with a scattering of settlements. It is evocative of picturesque, poetic and naturescape tropes. One reading of *In Provinciam Proficisci* is that it is a site of terror, where the potential for the progression of the colonialist ideology threatens to conquer that which is surveyed. This narrative relates to W.J.T. Mitchell's essay 'Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness' (2002), in which he describes the concept of 'a site of terror' as a place where histories, entitlements and deities of the indigenous people are completely erased (Mitchell, 2002, p. 282). *Oraculum Petere* on the other hand could be read as a form of territorial mysticism. In this large print a single central figure kneels upon the ground. They hold the *Baner Llecynnau* in their right hand whilst their left arm reaches high towards the skies. Their head is raised back, their eyes closed. It is as if they are in a state of prayer for deliverance or a recipient of some prophetic vision. The landscape appears familiar yet alien due to the heightened colour contrasts. The sky is dramatic and foreboding. Is the figure in communication with their gods? Their appearance is typical of a hiker, but their positioning and expression describe something else. Are they a prophet, a seer or a pilgrim?

The use of the flag as an emblem of power within the landscapes of *Oraculum Petere* and *In Provinciam Proficisci* disrupts any allusion to the picturesque. From a heightened vantage point, the figure and flag emphasise the political implications of landscape, where the potential for conquest, colonialism and violence is prevalent. As discussed above, the use of the flags can operate as a symbol, a visual device and an indexical sign. *Oraculum Petere* and *In Provinciam Proficisci* appropriate the flag so that it operates between all of these levels, in a heterotopic image space (Horlet, 2014).

Artistic Inquiry: *Prydeindod* and *Iaith Pawb*

An essay that was particularly relevant to the conception of the *Prydeindod* and *Iaith Pawb* banners was Dylan Phillips' 'A New Beginning or the Beginning of the End? The Welsh Language in Postcolonial Wales' (Phillips, 2005). Phillips questions the role the Welsh language plays as a cultural maker, especially post-devolution. He examines recent and historical Welsh language policies, the historical threat of its extinction and how the Welsh National Assembly aims to foster bilingualism (Aaron & Williams , 2005, p. xviii) so as to keep the Welsh language current and relevant. Phillips discusses how the Welsh language had been considered under threat and how there had historically been a 'language struggle' in the country, particularly when read from a colonial/postcolonial perspective. I found Phillips' writing extremely powerful and provoking. Its content was rich with material that I felt had the potential to be further examined through visual art practice. Phillips' essay highlighted a number of key critics, writers and philosophers who, in their own way, warned of a crisis of identity if the Welsh language was to be lost. The list of writers included Saunders Lewis, Emrys ap Iwan and J.R. Jones. Examples of texts, titles of essays and speeches included Saunders Lewis' *Tynged yr Iaith* ('Fate of the Language'), and Emrys ap Iwan's *'y Gymraeg yw'r unig wrthglawdd rhyngom a diddymdra'* ('the Welsh language is the only barrier between us and extermination') (Phillips, 2005, p. 104). I found these quotes could be potentially considered incendiary, and even though the majority had been written pre-devolution,[17] I felt that to revisit them through a piece of visual art could relate to issues

[17] Saunders Lewis' *Tynged yr Iaith* ('Fate of a Language') was broadcast as a lecture for BBC Welsh Region in 1962. Emrys ap Iwan's *'y Gymrarg yw'r unig wrthglawdd rhyngom a diddymdra'* ('the Welsh language is the only barrier between us and extermination') was an address dated 1895.

facing the UK at the time, which included debates in response to the Scottish referendum on independence. The spirit of nationhood fostered by these passionate nationalists was very much in my mind as I conceived the artworks.

During the development of this work, seven texts from Phillips' essay were extracted and considered in terms of their relevance to my aims for the work – 'Tynged yr Iaith' ('Fate of a Language'), (Lewis, S), 'y Gymraeg yw'r unig wrthglawdd rhyngom a diddymdra' ('the Welsh language is the only barrier between us and extermination'), 'rhyddhau'r Dywysogaeth oddi wrth yr ormes Seisneg' ('free the principality from English oppression'), (Iwan, E., ap), *Prydeindod* ('Britishness'), 'A Raid i'r Iaith ein Gwahanu? ('Need the Language Divide Us'), (Jones, J. R.), *Iaith Pawb* ('Everybody's Language') and 'Mac Mawr' ('Big Mac'), which acted as a comical but also quite goading commentary on the contemporary relevance and significance of Welsh as an everyday language. Phillips believes that this is one of the very rare instances where a global corporation has renamed one of its most famous products so as to acknowledge a language other than its preference for American English (Phillips, 2005, p. 107). I felt that the texts I selected could work well as slogans. Six were put forward for submission to the Eisteddfod. Held in the first weeks of August, the National Eisteddfod of Wales is the celebration of Welsh culture and language. When I make artwork specifically for the Eisteddfod, it is to invite the audience to question assumed notions of identity and culture and their relationship to territory.[18] As Lisa Lewis discusses in *Performing Wales: People, Memory and Place* (2018), the Eisteddfod is a stage on which versions of Welshness are played out (Lewis, 2018, p. 142). I find her reading of the Eisteddfod relevant to my inquiry in that it 'provides representations of all Welsh life in one place', with participating

[18] The project *Internal Exile* (2011) is a precursor to the banner-specific work.

groups performing multi-layered impressions of Welshness that upholds an enactment of 'nationness' (Lewis, 2018, p. 139).

A popular event at the National Eisteddfod is the exhibition of contemporary Welsh art. *Y Lle Celf* (art space) is a judged open exhibition that aims to promote contemporary artists, makers and architects who have a connection to Wales, be that through birth, language or residence. During the 2014 *Y Lle Celf*, the selectors included contemporary art curator Nicholas Thornton, ceramicist Lowri Davies and performer Eddie Ladd.

Figure 9: Prydeindod and Iaith Pawb banners in situ at the National Eisteddfod (2014). Paul R Jones. Photo. © Tom Goddard. All rights reserved.

Various decisions had been made in the studio about the banner's shape, colour palette and typeface. Experiments included questioning what typeface should be used. Helvetica and Impact appeared most appropriate. Both typefaces are sans serif, with strong lines and

compressed spacing. Initially, I preferred Helvetica due to its clean lines and readability. However, when considered in terms of creating a dynamic image, I became more convinced by Impact, as its heavy, broad lines brought strength and power to the words. The selection of colour palette went through a series of changes that included white text on a red background and white text on a green background. During these experiments I was responding to the colours associated with the Welsh National Flag. Through further exploration of other flags related to Wales, the decision to use yellow text on a black background was in reference to the St David Flag (*Baner Dewi Sant)*, which has often been used as the alternative National Flag in Wales.[19] Black flags have historically been used as symbols of revolution. The decision to use this colour palette and format was suited to how the artwork could operate at a provocative, if not antagonistic, level.

Initially, I considered that the banners would be positioned inside the exhibition space, either attached to the wall by map pins or suspended from the ceiling by hooks. The decision to attach the banners to flagpoles on the roof of *Y Lle Celf* became a preference when considering how to display them to a wider audience. The final proposal specified that *Prydeindod* and *Iaith Pawb* be made as banners and exhibited on flagpoles above the entrance to *Y Lle Celf*, and the four other texts be printed to billboard scale and exhibited either inside the exhibition space or dispersed across the Eisteddfod site.

The Selection Process

Two of the submitted works were selected by the judges. These consisted of the knitted polyester banners that included the text *Prydeindod* ('Britishness') (2014), and *Iaith Pawb*

[19] http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/society/flag-st-david.shtml

('Everybody's Language') (2014). 1.37m by 0.69m in size, the banners included rope and toggle fixings that allowed them to be hoisted onto flagpoles.

I imagined that my banners would work in contrast to the celebratory, corporate and commercial usage of flags and banners on the Eisteddfod field. The finalised position of the banners was next to another banner advertising the *Principality* Building Society and an array of feather flags and pennants. I found the situating of the *Principality* banner humorous, particularly when considering Wales' historic status as a sovereign state of England.[20]

Banners and flags are used as symbols of authority and they command attention. Hoisted high on flagpoles, the banners, as *readymades,* adapted an existing structure that was outside the traditional notion of an artwork, for example, a painting or a sculpture. Unlike the other banners and flags at the Eisteddfod, their aim was to provoke the audience to question their meaning. A comment made by one visitor was that they found the banners threatening. It made them question why banners with such alienating text written on them were allowed at the Eisteddfod.

Reflections

At the same time as making this work for the Eisteddfod, I was reading Ned Thomas' influential book *The Welsh Extremist* (1973), in which he suggests that the relationship between Welsh and English speakers in Wales was both psychologically fascinating and politically crucial. Thomas questioned how far the Anglo-Welsh felt that they were Welsh, proposing that the English-speaking Welsh were uncertain of their future direction. Phillips (2005) also observes that the Welsh language, even if it is not a first or second language, is

[20] Wales existed as a principality between 1216 and 1536.

the single most significant ingredient that unites the people as a nation. Phillips makes some interesting observations when discussing how the Welsh language is now supported not just at a government level, but also at a societal level too. I agree that the language has support from non-speakers (Phillips, 2005, p. 107) and I include myself in this group. I concur that the Welsh language acts as a significant cultural marker (Phillips, 2005, p. 101). When developing the works for submission to the Eisteddfod, I was questioning whether, as was the Welsh Assembly's intention, both the English and Welsh languages could co-exist. One of the billboard designs for this project used the text '*A Raid i'r Iaith ein Gwahanu?*' ('Need the Language Divide Us'), the title of J.R. Jones' 1967 lecture first delivered to Undeb Cymru Fydd's annual conference, in Aberystwyth. I thought this statement was applicable to my own thoughts on the issue. In a way, displaying *Iaith Pawb* alongside *Prydeindod* was a commentary on these thoughts. Phillips proposes that the 1966 publication *Prydeindod* (*Britishness*) by Jones was written in response to his fear that Welsh as a cultural marker was in danger of extinction. For Jones, the two elements of land and language enmeshed to make up a culture, and in Wales, these were gradually being eroded to the point that once their connection was broken, Welsh, as a distinguishable identity, would no longer exist. According to Jones, 'Britishness' was an invented category, imposed on the Welsh people by external bodies. He believed that the Welsh people were being uprooted by this notion of 'Prydeindod', which caused a splitting of personality, that is, a false premise of being (Williams, 2014, p. 216). The consequence of this was that the Welsh nation was in constant threat of being *Britished* out of existence (Williams, 2014, p. 216)**.** Thomas (1973) believes that the non-Welsh-speaking Welsh are in a difficult position in terms of their national sense of identity. I empathise with the need to defend Welsh culture and the unique Welsh landscape. Internally I struggle with a sense of integrity in regard to not being a native

Welsh speaker, particularly in regard to the language being the main marker of identity and the instrument used in 'the battle for the Welsh cause' (Phillips, 2005, p. 105). In many ways I feel my identity is problematised because I speak only the language of the coloniser. The purpose of the banner *Prydeindod* was to provoke both Welsh and non-Welsh speakers to re-evaluate predisposed indicators of identity. A response to the banners I was hoping for was characterised by artist and selector Eddie Ladd's account of her selection process. In her essay for the *Y Lle Celf* catalogue, the banners allowed her to open a discourse concerned with how artwork presented at the Eisteddfod may in reality aim to maintain British values rather than truly question Welsh identity. Should this kind of questioning really be left to politics and not art? In response to this, Ladd assesses the ways in which artists embed various cultural values in their work, and the role the artist plays at the border between being a native and a neutral, in this case to identify oneself with being British, in order to survive (Ladd, 2014, p. 19).

Artistic Inquiry: *Prydeindod (The Walk)*

> *Trying to make eye contact with members of the public who didn't want to engage. Did I want to engage? I was nervous before and during the performance. I was concerned that people would think I was being racist or anti something. I was scared that someone would jump me. This town is not known for its hospitality.*
>
> *They were curious yes, but they still didn't come to ask me what I was doing. I was just confronted by stares. Perhaps it was that the flag was unrecognisable. Perhaps it was because they could read the text. The two encounters I had were brief. I couldn't get an engagement. Perhaps I didn't want an engagement. After all I did feel rather uncomfortable at points. Perhaps it was because this is a familiar town for me. I walk*

along these streets every day. Perhaps it was the concern of being recognised on a future day. But why would this matter. Perhaps it could strike up a conversation. What were you doing the other day with that flag?

The performance lasted for 25 minutes. I had rehearsed the route in the morning pinpointing specific places that I wanted to linger at. This included the war memorial, coronation stone and miners arc sculpture. The selection of these landmarks was in reference to what could be considered as being symbols of a united British identity.

It was a rather half-attempted performance in many ways. Did I want to engage with the onlookers?

The Welsh language is a mystery to me. I struggle even to pronounce Prydeindod. I suppose this is part of the drive to create work such as this, the exposing of my ignorance.

The condition of Prydeindod as a threat to Welsh identity is a relevant question for me. When considering if I feel more Welsh or British I suppose I return to the idea of being what could be termed an inadequate Welsh person, inadequate because I am unable to speak the language. I do not have access to the connection between the land and its history that many say has forged its language. (Journal entry)

The static presentation of the banners at the Eisteddfod imbued them with a sense of authority and validated their standing as artwork that is presented officially as part of the *Y Lle Celf*. This opportunity to see my work within this context assisted me in thinking about other possible ways the same work could be presented. The *Prydeindod* banner flown at the Eisteddfod later became the vehicle for a performance piece. No longer anchored to a static position, the flag was now activated through the process of walking. This brought the flag into closer contact with a public and operated at a more immediate, interventionist level.

By working in a similar method to that of Francis Alÿs' walk with a knotted flag and Claus Beck-Nielsen's *The Impossible Walk* (2008) project, *Prydeindod (The Walk)* (2015) has connections to Augusto Boal's theory of invisible theatre. What I mean is that it inhabited a frame in which bystanders are transformed at any time into spect-actors. Invisible theatre takes place in environments outside what is considered traditional theatre. Boal gives examples of restaurants, trains and street markets as possible sites of invisible theatre (Boal, 2008, p. 122). He stresses that it is important that the people experiencing the scene are not aware that it is theatre. In order for this type of theatre to be successful, rehearsals should include every imagined scene of public interaction. When considered alongside my flag walk, I carefully mapped out my route to specific sites that I would stop at. The route itself was decided upon due to its public-ness, that is, the areas of the town that have the most footfall. A middle-aged man in a grey suit carrying a ceremonial flagpole with a black banner with *Prydeindod* written on it in yellow could appear eccentric and antagonistic. The performance applied Boal's theory in that, as part of invisible theatre, the actors do not reveal themselves as such. A chief aim for a person witnessing the event is to have the freedom to interact, to believe that the situation is real (Boal, 2008, p. 125). Boal stresses that the public that take part in invisible theatre are not spectators, as to be a spectator means to suppress a person into being passive, someone who is given a world already formed, a world whose values have been decided by those with power (Boal, 2008, p. 135).

Figure 10: Prydeindod (The Walk) (2015) Paul R Jones. Photo. © Richard Serridge. All Rights Reserved.

Framing the Performance

Using the musical analogy of keying, Erving Goffman, in 'Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience' (1974), defines the notion of a *key* as re-presenting an action already loaded with one set of meanings and interpreting it in a different way (Goffman, 1986, p. 44). By giving a series of cues, the action will be bracketed so that participants are able to register that a systematic alteration has occurred (Goffman, 1986, p. 45). Goffman describes multiples of these meanings as *laminations*. He observes that the frame is not just a device for controlling meaning but also controlling participation (Goffman, 1986, p. 345). I want to analyse *Prydeindod (The Walk)* using this method in order to situate the performance within the context of politicising the everyday (Boal, 2008; De Certeau, 2002;

Dezeuze, 2017; Mouffe, 2013) and the banner as a medium that exists in multiple image spaces (Holert, 2014).

In my performance, the laminations included the participation of those filming and photographing the performance, who followed me as I walked, stopped at specific sites, crossed over roads or engaged in conversation with the public. This separated the performance from pure invisible theatre, as the public read the frame as a spectacle. Why is that person with a flag being followed and photographed by a group of people?

The entourage of cameras created a sense of distance, a barrier between the public and me. The only members of the public who stepped beyond that barrier included those who had the confidence to be recorded as part of the performance. During the walk the public that encountered a man with a flagpole tended to observe from a distance. Those who unintentionally entered the space of the performance did not make eye contact, looking to the ground or elsewhere in the street, or moving away in order to observe the action from a safe distance. The group photographing and filming the performance were very conscious of their own presence within the event. Conscious of not wanting to step into each other's sight lines, they stealthily re-positioned themselves repeatedly in order not to break into the space that held me or the other documenters.

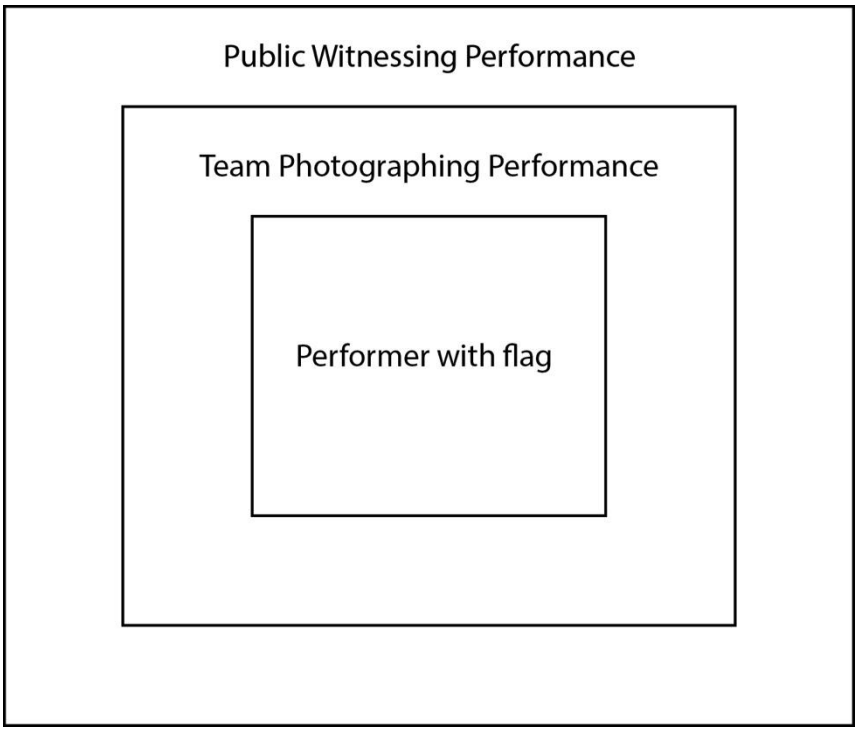

Figure 11: Frame Analysis of Prydeindod (The Walk)

The diagram (*Figure 12: Frame Analysis of Prydeindod [The Walk])* shows the laminations or layers that transform the activity. The performance, the altered *key,* is the central frame. The second frame holds the group that documents the performance, and the third frame contains the public that observe the performance, jolted out of the real world by encountering the spectacle.

This framing became a form of mobile territory, which, for me, acted as a barrier, something that I relied upon. When within this frame, I stayed in character, distanced and focused on achieving the main goal of making the walk to each designated site. The documentation of the performance presented another frame in which to explore its reading. The diagram (*Figure 13*: *Frame Analysis of Prydeindod Photography and Video Documentation)* shows the frames in which the performance is re-interpreted.

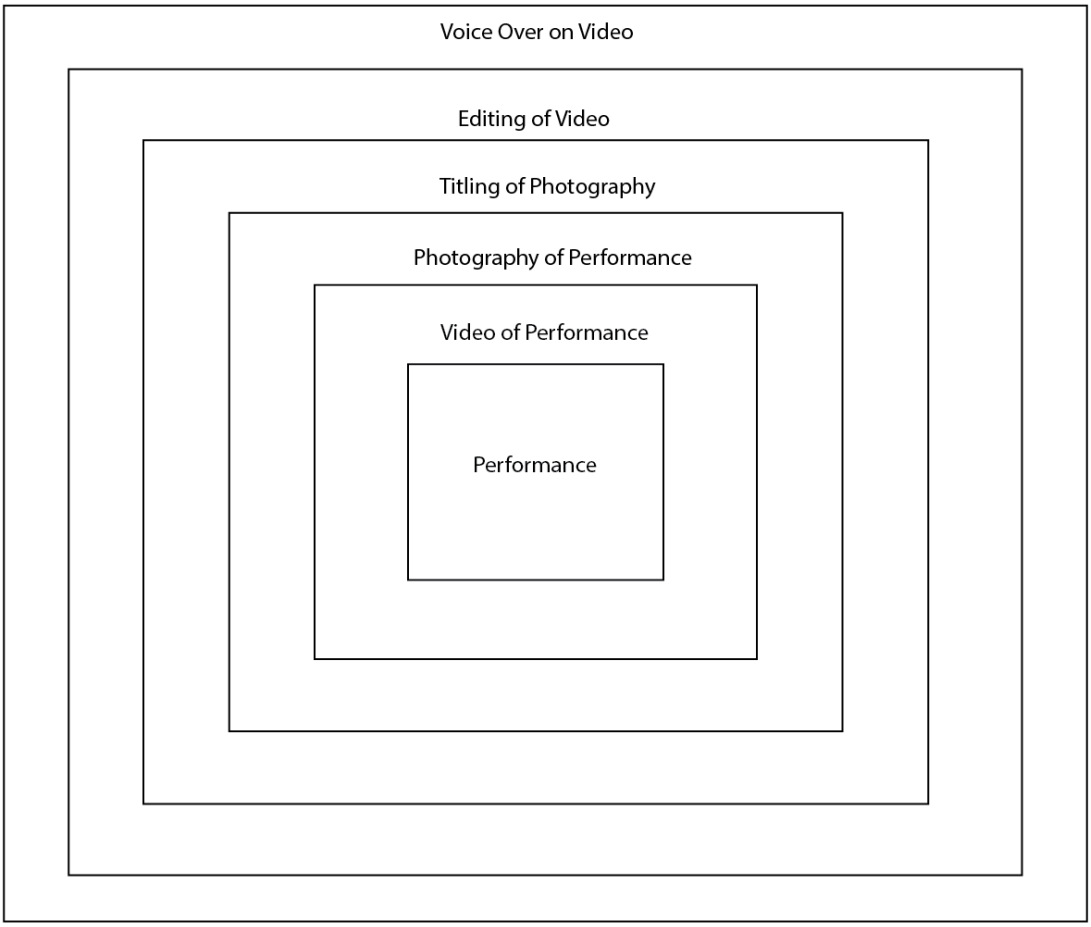

Figure 12: Frame Analysis of Prydeindod Photography and Video Documentation

From the central frame, we have both the video and photographic documentation in its raw condition. Those recording the performance took over 200 shots and 35 minutes of footage during the duration of the act, making both considered and impulsive decisions depending on how they reacted to situations encountered. To present all the unedited film and photography would create one interpretation of the event that possibly could be read as being closest to its reality. However, the selection of the photographs and editing of the footage tightly controlled the interpretation of the performance. Another lamination or layer of context was applied when naming the photographs and introducing a voice over to the video footage.

If I were to reconsider this performance, what would I have done differently? What would be the most important outcomes? In addition to carrying the banner, could I have gone out with a handheld loudspeaker and broadcast a series of questions and quotes from J.R. Jones' essay? Would a more dialogue-driven activity have helped to inform those willing to engage in the event? For example, perhaps a flyer that contained information about the project could have been distributed. There could have been an area containing chairs for people to sit and discuss the issues raised by the presence of the banner. As it was, the performance created an enigmatic action that was provocative and hopefully nurtured questions for those who witnessed it, beyond the moment of viewing.

Materiality, Performativity and Meaning

I use existing objects in order to produce an artwork that can instantly be read as being something within a known set of rules. Previously I have used road signage, tote bags, advertising space in newspapers and billboards as mediums in order to interconnect ideas to form (Krauss, 2011). Like the practice of Duchamp's readymade and assisted readymade, I find the objects I select already act as containers of meanings, which I can amplify and graft my own ideas upon. Often the objects are part of a performance. At other times they become performative, such as the banners exhibited at the Eisteddfod.

In my practice, flags act as visual devices: they are a medium. As a medium, they can highlight their role as a territorial marker and a symbol of power, and their own subversive plasticity. Used within the context of landscape, the flag communicates a potential to be read within a framework of identity politics, territory and authoritative control. When held by a flag bearer, as in the works *Oraculum Petere* and *In Provinciam Proficisci,* the flags and banners initiate questions related to the individual and the environment where they are displayed. As part of material culture, the flags that I appropriate or design often operate as

antagonistic devices, for example the banners designed for *Under the Welsh Flag* (2010), *Prydeindod* and *Iaith Pawb*, which draw an awareness as to how we make sense of national identity. The materiality and performative potential of flags and banners have implications for being transformative and affective (Holert, 2014; Neumann, 2007). Whether waved, flown from flagpoles or paraded through streets, my artwork emphasises the performativity of a flag in terms of dramatising and politicising, as in *Prydeindod*, *Iaith Pawb* (2014) and *Prydeindod (The Walk)* (2015). The artistic inquiry evidences the potency of flags and banners to operate at a level of segregation (Neumann, 2007), but also as a critical heterotopia (Foucault, 1986) that is a zone of crisis (or inadequacy) at which I question my relationship to identity relative to territorial affects that include language and cultural marker orientation.

CHAPTER 3: Of Another's Language

This chapter explores how I approach visualising the ways in which language acts as a cultural marker. I have spoken about language in previous chapters, but I now wish to discuss this cultural marker in more detail through an exploration of research practice based on a short extract from *Prydeindod* (1966) by J.R. Jones. This investigation developed directly from the *Prydeindod* banner (2014) and *Prydeindod (The Walk)* (2015), discussed in chapter two. In previous chapters I have examined how flags and borders operate externally as objects. Language, on the other hand, operates from the inside. This is where language begins – we make sounds, which, through a series of complex operations performed by lungs, tongue, teeth and mouth, become comprehensible.

Theoretical Positions: *Language on the Border*

In his study of religion, politics and sport in the village of Glyn Ceiriog, situated close to the border between England and Wales, Roland Frankenberg (1957) explores how language is used within a community. In his study and publication *Village on the Border* (1957),[21] Frankenberg discusses how the Welsh language operates in a number of social and political situations that include its use as a weapon of exclusion, its connection to industry and employment, and the villagers' ambivalence towards the use of Welsh. Frankenberg identifies that the Welsh language bonds the community to their village (Frankenberg, 1957, p. 29). *Village on the Border* contains interesting observations on how the Welsh language is used and how it operates within a public area, specifically in situations where a non-Welsh person is present. Frankenberg tells a fascinating story in which he entered a shop where a

[21] A similar study was conducted later by Isabel Emmett in *A North Wales Village: A Social Anthropological Study* (1964). However, the difference was that, as the English wife of a native of the parish, Emmett examines the nature and values of those living in the local community as someone embedded in that community.

heated debate in Welsh was taking place between two locals. On his entering the shop the language changed from being conducted in Welsh to English. This politeness in changing languages in the presence of the English monoglot was however also problematic and significant of othering. Frankenberg observed that even if the English speaker learned Welsh, the villagers would not speak to them in that language:

> Welsh is used as a weapon of exclusion, and it is two-edged. For an incomer not to learn it is regarded as arrogant. If he tries, he is regarded as presumptuous and seeking to obtain by trickery what was denied to him by birth. (Frankenberg, 1957, p. 33)

Antagonisms are a constant feature of Frankenberg's observations of the Welsh/English language debate. He writes that the villagers see the Welsh language as precious and a way to protect and mark their difference from the rest of the UK. However, when considered in terms of employment and industry, where the English language dominates, and its closeness to the border, these antagonisms appear much more ambivalent.

Frankenberg's initial study was concerned with unemployment and the social impact on the community. He selected Glyn Ceiriog because, although part of the UK, it was considered another country (Wales) where another language was spoken (Welsh). His interest was focused on the way that the community was affected by how the men of the village would have to cross over into England for work, which created tensions and had an impact on the social structures in the community (Frankenberg, 1983).

Relating to how Joseph Kosuth describes the artist as an anthropologist of their own culture (Kosuth, 1993), Frankenberg proposes that the role of the anthropologist should be to study one's own territory and look at rituals and behaviour at a local level. In the role of the anthropologist 'visiting' the *Other*, Frankenberg 'localised' the observations of language

contentions in Wales as they were at the time of his book's publication in 1957. Influenced by the concept of the artist as anthropologist and the concept of studying a community in the border region of Wales and England, I undertook a revisiting of Frankenberg's project, spending time in Glyn Ceiriog, the location in which he conducted his research. For this artwork, I conducted a series of interviews with the community, which included the owners of the post office and people who had known Frankenberg during his fieldwork. I created a series of video pieces documenting the location, the football team and the annual village fete, trying to capture a sense of the village and its culture. The imagery was accompanied by a voice over of my 'fieldwork' diary together with a recording of interviews where I asked people about the village, their concept of identity and their responses to Frankenberg's study.

It is interesting to note that the tensions of the English/Welsh language debate in the 21st century and post-devolution remain. In *Welshness in 'British Wales': Negotiating National Identity at the Margins* (2019), Daniel John Evans argues that, although the popular interpretation of national identity is concerned with the unification of nationhood (Evans, 2019, p. 167), this 'blanketing' of a hegemonic Welshness does not account for regional identities (Evans, 2019, p. 174). Evans is critical of Coupland et al. (2006), who claim that since post-devolution, distinct cultural regions are now considered 'just' Welsh. To illustrate his contention, Evans focuses on Porthcawl, in Glamorgan, South Wales, a tourist town located in what Balsom (1986) claimed as 'British Wales'. Whilst Evans' research revealed how the town presents a strong claiming of a Welsh identity, interestingly, residents in Porthcawl also found that their identity was affected by a clash of ideas concerning how to define 'Welshness'. Negotiating nationhood included how one validated the claim of being Welsh by language, accent or class. In his study, Evans determined that locals found it

difficult to define exactly how they fitted into the dominant ideas of Welshness, instead finding a 'third' way to 'circumnavigate the dominant linguistic and classed versions of Welshness' (Evans, 2019, p. 185). Evans concludes that 'new, modern referents of Welshness' need to emerge (Evans, 2019, p. 185).

Prior to this paper, in his PhD Thesis *Post-Devolution Welsh Identity in Porthcawl: An Ethnographic Analysis of Class, Place and Everyday* (2014), Evans observed that his construction of identity was very much influenced by growing up in a town that wrestled with its sense of nationhood. In the spirit of Joseph Kosuth, he approached the research as a 'native' from the place under study. He grew up in Porthcawl, and like Frankenberg, Evans shows the importance of place and social class as having an impact on how national identity is performed in contemporary Wales (Evans, 2014, p. 342). In addition to celebrating the collective identifiers of Welshness, such as supporting the nation in sports, Evans pointed to the problematics of Welshness in the town. In his thesis, he questions the positive interpretations of devolution that promote a homogenous Welshness, across what he termed the 'unWelsh regions of Wales' (Evans, 2014, p. 325), and reveals the complexities of identity that shift from the more binary interpretations offered by devolution and Balsom's *Three-Wales Model* (1984). Many of his informants measured their Welsh identity against ideals of Welshness, especially in terms of linguistic understanding and class.

The local population of Porthcawl was mostly middle class and projected a reserved sense of Welshness. Signs of a middle-class 'unWelshness' tended to be highlighted by their accent, which was more anglicised than the 'Welshy' accent of the working class, and this had an impact on how they viewed their own sense of identity at individual, local and national levels. The claim was that if one was from a working-class background, one had a greater

claim to Welshness, which emerged from popular representations of the Welsh, as seen in television comedies such as *Gavin and Stacey*, and a stronger connection to Welsh identifiers, such as taste in music, for example, the Stereophonics and Manic Street Preachers, being part of a close-knit collective and having a Welsh accent (Evans, 2014). Both middle class and working class still claimed Welshness at various levels. The informants he interviewed often claimed a Welsh identity, but were aware of the nuances of this construction, especially when looked at from the ideal of Welshness, agreeing that language remained the 'gold standard of Welshness' (Evans, 2014, p. 332).

> The language also prompted feelings of insecurity. Many locals would state that they were Welsh 'even though I don't speak Welsh', i.e., they were Welsh in spite of lacking this marker of nationhood – their 'type' of Welshness was automatically considered weaker because they did not speak Welsh. Their inability to speak Welsh in other words reinforced their 'thin' or 'weak' Welshness, just as the lack of Welsh in Porthcawl rendered it less Welsh as a place. (Evans, 2014, pp. 332-333)

IDEOLEG PRYDEINDOD

The political philosophies of John Robert Jones (1911-1970) centred on how the individual constructs their identity through connecting with their cultural heritage and language. His writings on Welsh nationhood and nationality had a great impact on political movements such as Plaid Cymru and Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Society) (Stephens, 1998, pp. 391-392).

Dewi Z. Phillips' book *Writers of Wales: J. R. Jones* (1995) gives the English speaker an invaluable insight into Jones' writings and has been important for my understanding of *Prydeindod.* It is through Phillips that I understand the premise of *Prydeindod* as a provocation to the Welsh people, especially those sympathetic to Welsh nationalism.

Addressed to a Welsh-speaking readership, *Prydeindod* is an analysis of the threat of a loss of Welsh national identity.

I am also indebted to Bethan Mair Jenkins and her PhD thesis *Concepts of Prydeindod (Britishness) in 18th Century Anglo-Welsh Writing,* awarded in 2009 by Trinity College, University of Oxford, for her invaluable insight into J.R. Jones' book. In the section '*Prydeindod – Britishness: a nationality, or a philosophical problem?*' (Jenkins, 2009, p. 39-54), Jenkins outlines Jones' ideological struggle with Britishness. Jenkins stresses that Jones believed 'Prydeindod' was an ideology 'masquerading as a nationality' (Jenkins, 2009, p. 37), and for Jones Britishness was to be understood as not part of the Welsh identity but as an 'enemy within' (Jenkins, 2009, p. 37).

Jones writes of a Welsh *people* rather than a Welsh *nation*. To be a nation, there needs to exist fundamental bonds to a defined territory, a national language and the 'encapsulation of that territory under one sovereign state' (Jenkins, 2009, p. 38). The problem for Jones is that terms such as 'Britishness' and 'Welshness' are incompatible because both are within one sovereign state. Jenkins explains Jones' concept of a *people* as rooted in the preservation of a linguistic continuity together with the concept of living within a territory for generations. During the period when *Prydeindod* was published, the threat of a slow death of the Welsh language that would lead to an 'elimination of the potential for nationhood' (Jenkins, 2009, p. 39) appeared to be a reality. The significance of Jones' proposition in *Prydeindod* is that without independence, there is only a people, not a nation (Phillips, 1995, p. 48). However, as Phillips points out, Jones' criteria could be considered too narrow, as other factors such as economics, education and religion are also important.

Other nationalist thinkers at the time, such as R. Tudur Jones, were critical of Jones in this regard (Phillips, 1995, p. 49).

If somewhat limited, Jones' criteria of a distinct land, a distinctive language and a sovereign government allowed him to deny Britain as a nation. Positioning his argument from an historical perspective that included the Act of Union and England as the government of Britain, Jones saw the relationship between Wales and Britain's sovereign governance as problematic. His dispute centred on the point that the UK (United Kingdom) is a collection of peoples rather than one land. Phillips sees this account as a direct challenge to some of his peers during the time, particularly fellow nationalists Alwyn Rees, who considered Britain a nation (Phillips, 1995, pp. 47-48). Jones believed the only nation that could claim Britishness in terms of the criteria were the English. This is because 'for the English, being British is equivalent to being English' (Phillips, 1995, p. 52).

For Jones, the survival of the Welsh people is coupled with the survival of their language. The consequences of defining the Welsh people as British includes the erosion of the Welsh language. If the language were to decline, then Jones predicted 'three stages of erosion of identity' (Phillips, 1995, p. 64). This would include firstly Wales being totally drawn into the 'framework of a so-called British nation' (Phillips, 1995, p. 65), secondly, the people of Wales becoming no more than a memory, and thirdly, this memory of a Welsh people eventually being forgotten. Jones held that without a language to support its difference, Wales would be merged into the English nation (Phillips, 1995, p. 65). For Jones, language is the most significant defining feature of a people. As Phillips observes, Jones argues that either 'Welsh is valueless to you […] or it is more important to you than any other language in the world' (Phillips, 1995, p. 67). Phillips' account of Jones' discussion on the loss of

language is also about the threat of losing one's Welsh identity. Jones defines a people as formed by language, history and tradition (Phillips, 1995, p. 63). In *Prydeindod*, Jones argues that the survival of the Welsh language is crucial for distinguishing a people. But as Phillips points out, at the time *Prydeindod* was written, Jones ignored the fact that both Ireland and Scotland saw themselves as nations, even though they shared the same language as the English (Phillips, 1995, p. 54).

Many of Jones' assertions on nationhood are echoed in David Storey's examination of how national identities are formed and classified. Storey views the construct of a nation in terms of how people share 'particular historical cultural characteristics or imagine themselves to do so' (Storey, 2012, p. 79). This is embedded through self-classifying systems, for example speaking the same language and sharing similar national traits, and perceptions of self, that is, identifying with a nation and belonging to a nation (Storey, 2012, p. 79). Drawing on the work of Monterrat Guibernau (1996), Storey pinpoints five key elements that compose national identity:

1. Psychological – conscious of forming a community
2. Cultural – sharing a common culture
3. Territorial – attachment to a clearly demarcated territory
4. Historical – possessing a common past
5. Political – claiming the right to rule itself

(Storey, 2012, p. 80)

Here we see a detailed analysis of the fundamental bonds that Jones proposed in *Prydeindod*. Similarly, Storey stresses that these are interlinked, with language and also religion being significant in defining the character of a nation (Storey, 2012, p. 80). Another shared reflection between Jones and Storey's description of national identity is that it is

more a ‘mental construct than a concrete reality’ (Storey, 2012, p. 81). The Welsh language, Storey writes, has been used as a divisive tool in how Welsh identity is presented. For many indigenous non-Welsh speakers within Wales, this has produced a feeling of being less Welsh and excluded from the nationhood narrative (Storey, 2012, p. 80).

However, it is important to highlight that this exclusion can be mirrored in the way Welsh speakers are also problematised in certain areas of social and institutional life, both in the border region of Wales and further inland. Such was the experience of Mihangel Morgan, who, when visiting part of a college campus (the institute is not stated, but we are led to surmise it is in Wales) he was unfamiliar with, asked a receptionist where a particular room was in Welsh. In response, the receptionist became hostile and demanded he speak to her in English (Morgan, 2007):

- *But you’re a receptionist. The College has a bilingual policy…*
- *Look*, she cuts through what I’m saying, *I’m not here to have an argument about language.*

(Morgan, 2007, p. 80)

On this occasion, speaking the Welsh language is shown to be both problematic and political even when bilingualism is encouraged within educational institutions.

There is also the problem of having a language but not feeling that one belongs to or owns its linguistic heritage. An example of this was encountered when I discussed languages with the artist Paul Eastwood, who, as a child living in the border region of North East Wales, attended a Welsh-speaking school. Neither of his parents spoke Welsh and the decision for him to be educated in the Welsh language did not come down to wishing for him to feel closely bonded to a national identity or to help to assist in his future career options in

Wales. It was simply due to the Welsh school having an earlier start date than the English-speaking school. Paul was educated in a language that he felt separated him from those at home and friends in the local area. In his art practice, Paul now seeks to reconcile himself with his Welsh linguistic and cultural heritage.

Linguistic Rift

In John Phillips' translation of the 1967 lecture *Need the Language Divide Us?*, J.R. Jones emphasised how language split Wales and in doing so fuelled suspicion, if not hatred, of the other (Jones, 1993). At the time when he delivered his provocative lecture, Jones believed that this language division was exacerbating the rift. He was sceptical of a dialogue between the two languages as, he believed, such a dialogue could only take place if *both* languages were spoken, rather than just one (Jones, 1993, p. 144). This problem lies at the centre of my own examination of how language creates a disunion when forming a national identity. Welsh, Jones declared, is the 'proper language of the territory', and that language is what makes the people of Wales different (Jones, 1993, p. 148). However, what of those without the language? Thankfully, Jones was aware of this plight:

> I maintain that neither a People's connection with their language nor their attachment to it come to an end when they cease to be able to speak the language. Because their structural connection with it remains, and is visible in the fact that they *exist* as a separate People. That language, along with their land, has been *built into their structure* as a separate People. (Jones, 1993, p. 150)

Jones declared that the non-Welsh language speakers should change their perception of such divisions, that they should work towards understanding that language is what unites the Welsh as a people. It is not just about tolerance but about being proud of what makes the Welsh unique. Jones wrote that they must 'undergo a sort of mental transformation with regard to Welsh and come to feel respect for it and pride in it, although they

themselves cannot speak it' (Jones, 1993, p. 145). He argued that they should become '*inwardly connected* with that which makes it possible for them to know they are Welsh' (Jones, 1993, p. 145).

Schizophrenia of Identity

Jones' impression was that the non-Welsh-speaking Welsh had disrespect or hostility towards the Welsh language. What needed to be addressed was how the Anglicised Welsh population could come to realise the necessity to preserve the language, to rebuild their connection to that which made them a unique people, and to embrace their Welsh identity over that of a British one (Jones, 1993, p. 152). This was a hard battle to win, as it required a rejection of the persistent ideological power of Britishness defining them as a nation. As Jones recognised, the 'belief has for generations planted in the minds of the majority of people in Wales something which has sometimes been likened to schizophrenia, an uncertainty or ambiguity as to their national identity, as to who exactly, or which People, they are' (Jones, 1993, p. 152). This ambiguity of identity is something that I believe is still being fought over, although there is a strong appreciation by both non-Welsh and Welsh speakers alike for a need to maintain the visibility of the language in all areas of life, to celebrate how that living language defines us as a people. In their study *The Language of Change? Characterizations of In-Group Social Position, Threat, and the Deployment of 'Distinctive' Group Attributes* (2009), Andrew G. Livingstone, Russell Spears and Antony S.R. Manstead explore how the attributes of Welshness are utilised in order to claim difference. Their study also highlighted the use of language as a device for claiming in-group status.

Their research into Welsh speakers also had a profound insight into how English-speaking Welsh natives considered themselves as being part of an in-group. Livingston, Spears and

Manstead found that non-Welsh speakers often felt their legitimacy of being part of the nation was more fraught with anxiety. They write of how non-Welsh speakers feel an incompleteness in their cultural identity, measuring their own sense of Welshness against that of speakers who had Welsh as a first language (Livingstone, Spears, & Manstead, 2009). They write of 'non-Welsh speakers, whose orientations towards Welsh were without exception bound up with their own expressed need to negotiate a position within the national category' (Livingston, Spears, & Manstead, 2009, p. 305).

Negotiating Language Identity

In their study of how Welsh people utilise the Welsh language as an identity management resource, Livingston, Spears and Manstead found that not only was language considered a significant cultural marker of Welsh identity, it also remained a tool of resistance to safeguard that identity (Livingstone, Spears, & Manstead, 2009, p. 301).

Through a method of interviewing first-language Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers, the authors found that the notion of Welshness is significantly connected to the use of the language in everyday situations. Just as in 1966 when Jones published *Prydeindod*, the threat of losing the language was still present in 2009 when this study was conducted. The commitment to applying the language at all levels of life remains paramount to its survival and the survival of the Welsh as a people.

In their study, Livingston et al. define the Welsh language as being just one cultural resource amongst many, rather than a political resource. The problem of viewing the language as a political tool undermines other markers of Welshness, thus emphasising marginalisation (Livingstone, Spears, & Manstead, 2009, p. 302). Of course, both groups shared the need to define themselves in terms of a Wales/England division and a construction of Welshness

was used as a device as part of this affirmation, with the Welsh language being used politically to assert this difference (Livingstone, Spears, & Manstead, 2009, p. 305). Whilst agreeing that the Welsh language was a crucial element of constructing identity, there was evidence that language acquisition played a major role in non-Welsh speakers seeing themselves as lacking. The response of non-Welsh speakers is discussed as a constant negotiation of defining their Welshness at an intra-national level, that is, to their Welsh-speaking counterparts (Livingstone, Spears, & Manstead, 2009, p. 306).

Livingstone et al. see Welsh as a symbolic resource which non-Welsh language speakers and Welsh language speakers use to define their identity (Livingstone, Spears, & Manstead, 2009, p. 306). They write:

> As with Welsh speakers, non-Welsh speakers' deployment of the Welsh language was bound up with characterizations of their broader social position. However, unlike Welsh speakers, non-Welsh speakers did so from the position of having to negotiate their own position within the group, by virtue of their not having the language. The strategies implied here ranged from an acceptance of the language's criterial position, through a redefinition of the language's role, to direct contestation of its importance. (Livingstone, Spears, & Manstead, 2009, p. 307)

In the essay 'Negotiating the Politics of Language: Language Learning and Civic Identity in Wales' (2007), Robin Mann questions the issue of non-Welsh speakers having a civic responsibility to learn the Welsh language and how this has an effect on identity negotiations and concepts of citizenship. After correlating interviews with Welsh language learners, Mann infers that their motivations for acquiring a proficiency in the language arises from feeling a civic duty and connection to the community in which they live. However, it is interesting to note that Mann's findings exposed how Welsh language learners are acutely aware of being the 'other' and 'outsiders' even, as the interviewees

stress, they are never made to feel unwelcome. In the report, this response is common to both in-migrants and Welsh-born learners (Mann, 2007).

Mann highlights the border of inclusion/exclusion between first-language speakers and Welsh learners and how it is the responsibility of both parties to allow linguistic cohesion to be successful (Mann, 2007). Interviewees spoke of their experience of bilingual interactions where speakers of Welsh would immediately flip from speaking Welsh to English in the presence of a Welsh learner. The switching of language often depended on the learner's fluency. Whilst understanding that speaking Welsh was natural and normal to first-language speakers, Welsh learner interviewees expressed their feelings of guilt in regard to such linguistic encounters. Mann observes that there was a constant negotiating of identities within everyday social interactions (Mann, 2007).

Situating Art Practice: *Welsh Not*

With regard to the exploration of language and identity in this chapter, the *Welsh Not* and *Spiral Gag* performances by Paul Davies during the 1977 National Eisteddfod in Wrexham are a significant influence on my practice. During this rather contentious Eisteddfod, Davies worked as a steward. After seeing the work of the European performance artists invited to this event, Davies asked the organisers if he could make a series of performances concerned with Welsh identity. In *What's Welsh for Performance? An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales (vol.1)* (2007), Heike Roms, during an interview with Timothy Emlyn Jones (2007), raised the concern that, although he was supportive of the radical nature of the international performance work presented, Davies felt that there was no real engagement with the context of the specifics of place (Roms, 2008, p. 126). In response, Davies made *Welsh Not* and *Spiral Gag*, which examined issues around Welsh language and Welsh

identity. These issues were particularly prominent, as the Eisteddfod was held in the border town of Wrexham, where the Welsh/English cultural identity markers remained ambiguous. As Andrew Knight writes,

> Wrexham was one of those places that perhaps saw itself a little bit on the edge of Wales: was Wrexham Wales or was it in Cheshire; was it responding to audiences from Liverpool and Manchester or was it dealing with Welsh audiences? (Roms, 2008, p. 110)

Davies' *Welsh Not* and *Spiral Gag* performances were politically charged. They acted as 'an individual artist's public declaration of Welsh identity to the Welsh nation gathered at the Eisteddfod' (Davies, 1998, p. 3). Davies' work confronted the problematics of identity, at both a personal and national scale (Hourahane, 1998).

The *Welsh Not* performance consisted of Davies holding up a railway sleeper, symbolising the weight of the historical condition, with the letters 'NW' scored into it and accompanied by a blackboard nearby that informed the audience that the 'Welsh Not' was a 19th century form of punishment aimed at discouraging Welsh from being spoken by children in schools in Wales. As part of this punishment, the child was given a plaque or stick if caught speaking the Welsh language during lessons. This humiliating form of discouragement for using the language was led by a parliamentary report in 1847 on education in Wales,[22] which saw the use of Welsh as a disadvantage. It was believed that increasing the use of English would improve the moral and material condition of the people, who had been considered ungovernable (BBC, 2014). The performance was also a method of self-punishment, for Davies held the railway sleeper over a long duration of time until finally submitting to fatigue and dropping it to the ground.

[22] This was later known as 'The Treachery of the Blue Books'.

Spiral Gag involved Davies fighting his way out of a Union Jack[23] and holding a ceramic plaque which included the words 'aros mae' ('it remains'), which referred to the endurance of the Welsh language and culture. Whilst placed on the ground, the ceramic plaque was driven over by a van and shattered, a coincidence that Heike Roms says Davies interpreted as 'symbolic of the Welsh situation' (Roms, 2008, p. 126).

Shelagh Hourahane, in her essay 'A Mare in a Grey Sheet: Welsh Not' (1998), talks about these performances as a way of Davies facing the problematics of his roots. Due to his father's career in the military, Davies lived in a number of places both in Wales and in Europe, and as a consequence did not learn the Welsh language. Hourahane identifies this as a personal loss for Davies, who then expanded this into broader political concerns joining 'others of his generation to try to redress the effects of more than a century of erosion of the language' (Hourahane, 1998, p. 17). However, such was the impact of the *Welsh Not* performance that Ivor Davies remarked that Davies later learned Welsh 'well enough to speak in public and to have arguments about politics with me' (Davies, 1998).

Speech Acts

> Of course each language carries its own history of alignments and contested identities. Behind these lies the materiality of each language – the phonemes, the cadences, the rhythms etc… (Charnley, 2007, pp. 9-10)

The work of artist Clare Charnley is centred on communication and language. Using performance, video and collaboration, much of Charnley's work explores the relationship and politics of language, nationalism and culture. In her six-year project *Speech* (2002-2007), Charnley visited a series of countries collaboratively making live art pieces in which she

[23] Significant to this performance is that 1977 was the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee (Roms, 2008, p. 126).

would speak in the host country's language to an audience who would often be unaware that the words Charnley spoke came directly from a hidden native speaker of that language. Charnley had no knowledge of the language she spoke, and this led to frustration as she would often mispronounce or struggle to hear what had been said in a language alien to her. It could be seen that Charnley appeared as an echo.

> It's important to understand that the speech project involved working with only one person in each country. It would be ridiculous to think that person could 'represent' their culture or language to me. In any case, I was deliberately not dealing with overviews or big pictures – just making an event to try to engage very personally and subjectively. Small-scale. Zoomed-in. (Charnley, 2018)

One example of Charnley's *Speech* collaborations can be witnessed in the video documentation of a performance for Performance Art Platform, in Tel Aviv in 2005. In this video we see Charnley standing on a small plinth, an audience seated in front of her and performance artist Anat Pick, Charnley's collaborator, standing behind them and directly opposite to Charnley. The room is sparse, with unpainted walls and harsh white light. Pick speaks Hebrew in short bursts, followed by Charnley, who repeats the sounds of the words. The story is autobiographical, as it concerned Pick's confrontation with a profoundly deaf postal worker whom she caught defecating in a car park and using the mail to wipe his backside (Pick, 2007, pp. 12-13). The story was both humorous and shocking and Charnley had no idea what this story was about. She simply sounded out each word as accurately as she could. The audience's response gave some indication of the content of the story, but even this was complicated by her pronunciation, or rather mispronunciations. She was perplexed when they laughed loudly, vulnerable to every response. There was a look of deep concentration on Charnley's face, her listening hyper-alert to Pick's speech. Pick was more concerned with telling the story in an informal, matter-of-fact way, wanting to make

sure that she spoke clearly enough so that Charnley could hear the nuances of the language. Pick transmits her story through Charnley, shouting corrections when words are mispronounced, smiling when Charnley repeats something comprehensibly:

> All this sits with my interest in exploring and flagging up cultural ignorance while not being in control. The idea is that the project serves different purposes for the two participants, though of course we both impact on the other's meaning. (Charnley, 2018)

Having performed *Speech* in many parts of the world, including China, Estonia and Poland, Charnley has also collaborated with the poet Mererid Hopwood at the National Eisteddfod in Caernarfon 2005:

> I was put in touch with Mererid by Lleucu Seincyn (who worked in Academi, I think) and Iwan Bala. Mererid was very responsive to my approach, saying she loved hearing Welsh spoken falteringly because it needs as many learners as possible. This was in contrast with a previous collaborator whose initial attitude was 'how dare you mangle our beautiful tongue?' Also I remembered Mererid thanking me for being aware of her language on my English doorstep, so to speak, and not 'jumping over' it. So, Mererid's response helped me understand, not just that her language is central to who she is, which I guess is true of us all. (Charnley, 2018)

At an ethnolinguistic level, Meredith's possession of the Welsh language as a defining characteristic of her identity, its significance for how it binds her to the country, culture and heritage, highlights how the Welsh language defines what constitutes Welshness. Charnley observed that 'Mererid herself was a big part of my encounter with the Welsh language and it doesn't seem useful, or in the spirit of the project, to try to separate the two' (Charnley, 2018).

Charnley puts her faith in the native speaker's words, where power relationships are ever present. There was a possibility that her collaborator could use Charnley in order to voice something political or controversial. There is no way for Charnley to know what commentary is being placed through her verbal replications. However, Charnley and her

collaborators see this as a ‘mutual vulnerability’ in that both parties are held within a power relation that swings between them, where ‘meaning can be contradicted/twisted/exaggerated/rendered incomprehensible’ (Charnley, 2007, p. 9).

Again referring to her experience at the Eisteddfod,

> The idea was that Mererid chose my clothes and the situation of the performance, but would not direct me in how to deliver the speech. I’d do what felt best. So I found myself, a little ridiculous, on a platform dressed […] in black, with a bright clunky necklace and dark glasses that were inappropriate for the light levels and acted as demi-blinkers. Perhaps my dress impacted on how I spoke, but more pressingly a brass band struck up nearby which made it extremely hard to hear Mererid talking into the radio mic from the tent behind me and also for my audience to catch ‘my’ poorly pronounced words. In response, my tone became declamatory and a bit bombastic, not the way I had practised at all. I guess this was partly to deal with a panicky feeling of not being able to hear Mererid. (Charnley, 2018)

I found it interesting how Charnley approached the use of her body as an object, an instrument to be projected upon, and ‘spoken through’. The performances appear quite intimate, between two people, but exposed to a public space. I was taken by her explanation of the preparation for the performance and the alterations that took place during it, from the fine-tuning of her vocals to the affective response to how Charnley dressed during the performance and the external noise and events that intruded upon it. Charnley arrives at a point of becoming disconnected from the self who gives the speech, ‘she is no longer quite me’, Charnley declares, ‘My sense of self softens, becomes wider and less clear. I have left something behind with my language’ (Charnley, 2007, p. 10).

Negotiating Linguistic Identities

Through video, photography and installation, the French Algerian artist Zineb Sedira explores how identity is intertwined with geographical, political and cultural frames. A daughter of migrants who came from Algeria to France, Sedira, now based in London, applies methods of the autobiographical and documentary filmmaking to examine inter-

cultural exchanges, diaspora, separations and returns. In her 2002 video tryptic *Mother Tongue,* Sedira questions how language can become fractured and problematic if its lineage of cultural signifiers is broken. This three-screen video piece includes three conversations between three generations. In the first video we see and hear Sedira in conversation with her mother. Sedira speaks in French and her mother replies in Arabic. In the second video Sedira talks to her daughter in French whilst her daughter asks questions and responds in English. The conversations centre on childhood, particularly memories of schooling. The last video presents the grandmother and daughter, each speaking their mother tongue. Although a feeling of deep affection between the two is very much present, we are painfully aware of the breakdown of verbal communication in this video, as neither the grandmother nor the child can understand the other's first language. We witness their awkward silences and embarrassing moments of looking towards each other and at Sedira, who remains off camera and refuses to intervene or act as a translator. None of the videos contain subtitles, leaving the viewer as lost as those in the video, unless, that is, like Sedira, they can speak Arabic, French and English.

In an interview for the Tate Shots series, after becoming a mother herself, Sedira developed an interest in what she terms the transmission of culture and tradition. The video piece *Mother Tongue* is focused on three generation of women in her family. Exploring the bilingual aspect of her own identity, Sedira sees the work as questioning how barriers to language problematise relationships between the generations. Sedira positions herself as acting as the mediator between the daughter and grandmother (Tate, 2017).

This work brings into sharp focus the distance that can be caused when a language is lost between generations of the same family. As Rebecca Heald writes in response to Sedira's piece:

> Everyone inherits and exists within language. Even if in this work [*Mother Tongue*] verbal communication is denied, the viewer sees a clear example of cultural negotiation and the many layers that make the subject aware of who they are and where they are from. (Heald, 2005, p. 162)

This work could also be demonstrative of the plight of minority languages. As younger generations migrate to other countries, a 'mother tongue' can be lost if it is not kept alive as part of a cultural heritage and identity.

Artistic Inquiry: LANGUAGE

Please click here for presentation of practice documentation for **Artistic Inquiry LANGUAGE**

First, apologise for not being able
To speak Welsh. Go on: apologise.
Being Anglo-*any*thing is really tough;
Any gaps you can fill with sighs.

(Davies, 1986, p. 66)

Cymry/Sais? Or if I can only think and speak in English, does this mean I have an English mind? I dwell at the balancing points of many borders but most notably that of my identity, which straddles a Welsh/English dichotomy. I am S*ais* (English), raised and educated in what Balsom (1985) describes as British Wales, but feel myself to be a part of the *Cymry* (Welsh) of *Cymru* (Wales). I am both an insider (born in Wales) and outsider (monoglot English-speaking). However, I am deeply aware of a divided sense of belonging due to my inability to speak the Welsh language. In his essay 'A New Beginning or the Beginning of the End? The Welsh Language in Postcolonial Wales' (Phillips, 2005), Dylan Phillips emphasises how language is a significant factor in how a culture identifies itself (Phillips, 2005, p. 111).

In *Wales From Within: Conflicting Interpretations of Welsh Identity,* Fiona Bowie (1993) explores how identity is articulated through the ownership of language. Bowie questions how language can be a means of becoming part of a community whilst also acting as a way of maintaining a boundary between in-groups (Welsh language speakers) and out-groups (non-Welsh speakers and Welsh learners). This said, it could be argued that these boundaries can be transfigured through the learner's continuing degree of fluency. However, my reading of Bowie's study is concerned with how it brings into focus this

invisible yet present insider/outsider, Welsh/English condition where language is exclusively used as a form of territoriality. By remaining monoglot, I am what Bowie observes as 'not quite Welsh' (Bowie, 1993, p. 177), even if I learnt Welsh as a second language. Bowie highlights how the English-speaking Welsh population feels incomplete in terms of belonging. I sympathise with her description of how one can feel a sense of loss of heritage and nationality. On hearing people speaking Welsh whilst travelling on the Cardiff to Chester train line, I cannot help but lament my own inadequacies for not growing up speaking the language of my country. However, this linguistic drawback, which I am aware is shared by many, perhaps also places me in a fascinating position, one that drives the inquiry. How can I as an artist visualise the embodiment of identity of self at a geographical border zone?

Bowie believes that the question is not about whether a person is Welsh, but *if* that person *is Welsh-speaking* (Bowie, 1993, p. 179). From this perspective, the language question is refocused so that it becomes political (Bowie, 1993, p. 178). With the loss or inability to possess the language, there is a loss of heritage. She writes:

> Welsh is the medium of literature, history and mythology of the country, of so much that has formed the Welsh as a separate people down the ages and which makes them different from the English. The meanings of names, the rhythms of Welsh poetry and the multifarious associations of spoken and literary Welsh are incapable of translation. (Bowie, 1993, p. 186)

This idea of the unique identity of the Welsh, what makes the people different from their English neighbours, is drawn from the ability to possess the Welsh language. This, Bowie stresses, creates a 'complex issue with feelings of guilt, resentment and nostalgia' (Bowie, 1993, p. 186) that is carried by both Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers. As a native of Balsom's British Wales, I identify with the conflict of both supporting the preservation of the

Welsh language and positioning myself within an English-speaking Welsh identity (Bowie, 1993, p. 189).

Cultural Belonging

In *Performing Wales: People, Memory and Place* (2018), Lisa Lewis considers culture as performative. Examining ways in which Welsh culture is endorsed, remembered and maintained, specifically through museums, theatre, festivals and place, Lewis' argument is centred on the idea that culture is a performative act that we all participate in (Lewis, 2018). Lewis identifies that we constantly participate in performing our Welshness to ourselves and to the world (Lewis, 2018, p. 218). This idea of performing *nation-ness* is particularly relevant to what motivates my general inquiry. The examination of language, in terms of friction and sense of cultural belonging, manifests itself in several of my previous works. *Cymhwyster* (2008) and *Wälschen* (2010) confront this issue in a very direct manner. *Cymhwyster*, exhibited at the National Eisteddfod in Cardiff (2008), was made in response to the questions on the Eisteddfod entry form where the applicant was required to declare that they had been born in Wales, resided in Wales, had Welsh parentage and could speak Welsh. The piece consisted of a scaled-up digital print of the entry form, with three out of the four requirements ticked.

Wälschen was made in response to reading T. Stephens' book *Welshmen.* Published in 1901, Stephens examines the origins and culture of the Welsh. He writes that the term 'Welsh' is derived from Saxon and an extraction from the German verb 'Wälschen', meaning 'to talk gibberish'. The Teutons also used the word 'Welsh' to describe a stranger or foreigner. In this performance I took on a role of hostile native, speaking in a made-up language that, to the English ear, could possibly be interpreted as Welsh. However, to a Welsh audience it

was complete nonsense. I created a character whose threatening actions suggested a marking of territory. The performance took place at Beuno's Stone in Berriew. This Neolithic standing stone is believed to mark the place from which English was first heard, and thus the beginning of the English colonisation of Wales. *Wälschen* was exhibited at the National Eisteddfod at Ebbw Vale in 2010. My objectives for this piece included the audience being witness to a documentation of an anthropological encounter with the Other. This Other performed an altercation to the camera. I wanted any English-only speakers to believe that this language was rooted in Welsh, but for the Welsh speakers to be confused by the language. The character's actions spoke more about the anxiety and threat of the hostile encounter. The camera was invading the character's space. The end of the video showed the character defining their territory by the marking of the ground with a stick, then standing firm, ready to defend it.

Internal Exile

> Internal exile strikes individuals living where solutions concerning the relationship of a community to its surroundings are not, or at least not yet, consented to by this community as a whole. (Glissant, 1990/2006, p. 76)

The intervention at the National Eisteddfod, *Internal Exile* (2011), was directly influenced by Paul Davies' performances in 1977. In this piece I entered the maes as a paying visitor, as I had been unsuccessful in my application for that year's *Y Lle Celf*. Once on the site, I changed into red overalls, placed silver duct tape across my mouth and wore a sandwich board with the words 'INTERNAL EXILE' printed in large, bold lettering. I then proceeded to walk through the maes towards the *Y Lle Clef*. As I made my slow journey, I handed out postcards which had a link to a website[24] giving further information about the performance.

[24] Internal Exile website https://sites.google.com/site/theinternalexile/home/menu/menu/title-page

However, shortly after beginning my intervention I was stopped by site security, who took me to their office to question my motives. Apparently, they had had reports that my presence was unnerving visitors and the work could be construed as politically incendiary, which has often been the case with my submissions for the National Eisteddfod.

The reference to internal exiles was rooted in an R.S. Thomas poem *The Lost* (Thomas, 1994). Although, as I interpret it, this poem is concerned with the loss of a Welsh language in response to the colonisation by the English tongue alone, for this performance I flipped the focus so that within the 'enclave' of the Eisteddfod the English language became that of the minority. Thus, the words 'We are exiles within our own country' hit a cord with my own feelings of how I understood my identity, especially within the 'frame' of the National Eisteddfod where I felt unable to engage fully due to the language barrier. As a form of over-identification with that of a minority language speaker, I classed myself as an internal exile, as someone who on entering the Eisteddfod was not allowed to speak my mother tongue (English) in the land of my birth (Wales). As the Eisteddfod was held in Wrexham that year, the concerns of cultural identity that Paul Davies had drawn attention to in 1977 remained open to discussion, as, according to the 2011 census, only 12.9% of the population were able to speak Welsh[25] in the county.

Artistic Inquiry: *Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn Version 1 & 2* (2018)

> CYTUNAIS fod cymundod unclwm Prydeinig, ond dadleuais nad oes iddo glymiad a ffurfiant cenedl. Y gwir yw nad 'cenedl Brydeinig' sydd gennych ond rhywbeth arall sydd, yn fy marn i, fel lefain yn y blawd yn araf 'suro'r cwbl' yng Nghymru, a hwnnw yw'r syniad neu'r goel fod Prydain yn genedl. Ar batrwm y gair 'Cymreictod', galwaf y cenedligrwydd honedig hwn yn 'Brydeindod'. Effaith ladradaidd y goel hon yw rhoi i ni'r Cymry wedd ffals ar y Brydain Unclwm, sef peri iddi ymrithio inni fel sylwedd

[25] Information retrieved from Statswales.gov.wales - *Welsh speakers by local authority and broader age groups, 2001 and 2011 census. https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LA-BroaderAge-2001And2011Census [Last accessed 5 July 2018].*

> cenedligol yn gwreiddiwn ynddo ar dir cyfartal â'r Sais. Dygir i fod fel hyn fath o rhithfyd, hynny yw, o fyd ffurfiannol rithiol, ar ddaear Cymru. A lle bo rhithfyd, y mae dynion yn agored i'w cyflyrru mewn dulliau diarwybod iddynt, hyd at glafychu yn y diwedd o ddoluriau cuddiedig, niwrotig, nad oes modd eu dwyn i'r golau ond drwy 'geibio'. (Jones, 1966, p. 34)

The pieces created for *Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn* are evocative of a Victorian pedagogic punishment. In the performance I was crowned with a cone-shaped hat that has come to symbolise an imbecile, the *slow learner,* who is ostracised from the main body of the learning community due to their inability to maintain the level of comprehension that the teacher demands. Throughout this work, other learners and teachers remain absent. Only the image of the individual, self-situated as outcast, is shown, isolated.

> *Words that are manifested into sounds as they pass spoken aloud through a naïve phonetic technique. The dunce mis-pronounces, stumbles across, and slurs over words. Are these precious words? Is this sacrilege? Why this book? Why this passage? Why this need to attempt to sound them out in such a way? What does the dunce want to communicate? Illustrate? Show us? Is the dunce mocking the language or honestly attempting to unlock its meaning? Does the dunce wish to bring forth an understanding of the passage through some kind of subliminal rendering, charged by linguistic utterances?* (Journal entry)

Punishment, Embarrassment, Guilt

The cone-shaped hat that was constructed for the performance draws upon the history of the dunce cap, an apparatus that was a form of punishment in the classroom with the specific purpose of ostracising those children considered as being slow or lazy learners. This type of punishment also included standing or sitting in a corner of a classroom, often facing a wall. It brings to mind the types of school punishments popularised in Victorian literature,

but the use of this hat also references its origins in the Dun's cap, associated with the 13th century Franciscan Master and philosopher John Duns Scotus, whose application of a conical hat was believed to stimulate a pupil's focus. In this way, the hat would act as a device for channelling knowledge downwards into the head.

Figure 13: Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn Version 1 (2018). Paul R Jones. Video Still.

In *Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn Version 1* (2018) we see the dunce in a rural landscape, book in hand, sitting on a rock, reading aloud – if this can be called reading, as they do not appear to have an understanding of what they actually mean. I make sounds, guessing at the phonetical make-up of each word, and imagining how they would be pronounced rhythmically through a simplistic understanding of how the Welsh language is spoken. The imagery itself, the use of the picturesque, reminiscent of romanticism, situates the work within the traditions of representing Wales through its landscape. This bringing together of

the pastoral and language are used as political apparatuses when shaping and sustaining national identity.

I speak the language of the colonialist. However, I am wary of this type of statement as it could possibly incite radicalism or extremist views. This is something that I do not agree with or promote.

Geographical proximity to England, Anglo-Welsh schooling and parentage place me in a language void. Of course, I share this fate with many people within certain areas of Wales, particularly those close to the border. Here I turn to the words of R.S. Thomas, specifically his poem titled *Welsh*:

Why must I write so?
I'm Welsh, see;
A real Cymro,
Peat in my Veins.
I was born late;
She claimed me,
Brought me up nice,
No Hardship;
Only the one loss,
I can't speak my own
Language – Iesu,
All those good words;
And I outside them,
Picking up alms
From blonde strangers.
I don't talk like their talk,
Their split vowels;
Names that are ghosts
From a green era.

I want my own
Speech, to be made
Free of its terms.
I want the right word
For the gut's trouble,
When I see this land
With its farms empty
Of folk, and the stone
Manuscripts blurring
In wind and rain.
I want the town even,
The open door
Framing a slut,
So she can speak Welsh
And bear children
To accuse the womb
That bore me.

(Thomas, 1993, p. 129)

Only the one loss, / I can't speak my own / Language. The poem resonates with my own inadequacies and struggles with the mother tongue. *All those words; / And I outside them* appears to be fitting to my reading of *Prydeindod*, as the dunce attempts to extract tonal utterances of meaning, trying to decode a text that remains rooted within the soil of its origins. *I don't talk like their talk, / Their split vowels;* This is evocative of the development of the tongue in speech acquisition. The phonological practice of vowel and consonantal sounds, voiceless alveolar lateral fricatives, voiceless nasals, voiceless alveolar trills – many of these do not exist for those versed in the English tongue, but all need to be mastered early on in one's linguistic education so as to become fluent in Welsh.

The environment in which I grew up had a series of factors that influenced the lack of Welsh language acquisition. This included the status of the language locally and the low usage of the Welsh language within the area (Romaine, 1989). Along the border region of North East Wales, Welsh was very much a minority language. All areas of life, domestic, work and official, were, and to a certain extent still are, conducted primarily through English. Similarly, to many people living in this area of Wales, Welsh was the secondary language. In fact, I rarely remember it ever being used in public.

Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn VERSION 2 (2018) situates the dunce sitting on a highchair beside a window. The room appears to be institutional, with dark wooden panels and white walls. In this piece, the dunce faces the corner of the room towards the window. During this encounter we see the dunce dutifully read the text from the open book, carefully reciting the words. He imagines how they would sound if spoken in a Welsh accent. It is a crude rendition of the Welsh spoken language. He stumbles, tries to correct himself, repeats pronunciations, stutters, and slowly forms syllables, vowels; he battles with the phonology of the language, guessing where to add stresses. How to approach intonation? There is a sense of self-disciplining through the dunce's verbalising of the text; also, a frustration and impatience. Has the dunce reduced himself to this condition? Has he decided upon his own punishment for being such a slow learner of the Welsh language?

Linguistic Utterances

> It would be possible to imagine people who had something not quite unlike a language: a play of sounds, without vocabulary or grammar. ('Speaking with tongues.') (Wittgenstein, 1989, p. 143)

In both *Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn Version 1* (2018) and *Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn VERSION 2* (2018) we witness the dunce attempt to verbalise the same opening paragraph of the chapter

Ideoleg Prydeindod in J.R. Jones' book *Pyrdeindod* (1966). For me, *Ideoleg Prydeindod* is a philosophical thesis of what Britishness means, and I was interested in what Jones writes about this. Britishness for Jones is an ideology. This ideology creates tension within Wales due to the idealistic desire to be on equal terms within the framework of Britishness (Bohata, 2004). But my understanding of this is drawn from other writers' translations and interpretations of Jones' book. There is no English language version of Jones' book. I find this fascinating because my understanding is that it speaks about identity, and the struggle between defining oneself within Welsh and British identities. To write *Prydeindod* in Welsh means to think of this issue in Welsh, and thus it cannot be truly translated or captured through another language. This creates a sense of inaccessibility for me as a Welsh person who is an English-only speaker. Its knowledge is locked away from me. Thus, the text falls into the realms of the mystical, the impenetrable. I attempt to speak the words, hoping that as I sound them through the physical limitations of my English tongue a supernatural transmission will take place, by way of the phenomenon of glossolalia, or where I will suddenly begin to perceive their meaning through serendipity.

Artistic Inquiry: *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn): Welsh Lesson* (2018)

> *To start from a position of vulnerability. To expose a weakness. The Welsh Dunce perched on a seat, book in hand, cone hat fixed upon his head. The first word, cytunais, is corrected by the 'teacher' off screen, and this creates the pattern for the rest of the piece. To be corrected on almost every word. To stumble, forget words that have been encountered in a previous sentence. The struggle very much evidenced on the face, the look toward the 'teacher' for confirmation of a pronunciation. The lack of confidence showed clearly in the awkward sitting position, the expression on his face. Thirteen minutes that pushed and pulled at each word, breaking apart each*

> *sentence, an exercise of desperation but with a commitment to work through this opening paragraph of Ideoleg Prydeindod.* (Journal Entry)

The experience of the performance reminded me of how Clare Charnley had described her collaboration with Mererid:

> In preparation for the performance, Mererid and I met up and tried things out, I guess figuring out what my limits were and how best to use me. She wrote, and then adjusted the speech and I spent a lot of time, much of it later on my own, trying to get my brain, ears and mouth round the sounds. The listening is an intimate process. And especially closely watching the other's lips in a sustained way – something that's not socially acceptable outside parent/child or lovers' relationships. As I describe in the essay, I felt gently infantilised in a way that was liberating. I experienced Welsh as pure sound – that is, I didn't find myself guessing at meanings as I might with a Latin based language. Particularly with repetition, it became strong and sweet. There were sudden changes in rhythm. You will see the reason from the attached script, but of course I didn't have access to its meaning at the time. (Charnley, 2018)

Unlike the performance to camera piece, in this part of the *Welsh Dunce Twpsyn* I felt vulnerable. It concerned my having the 'teacher' as both collaborator and audience. Would they feel insulted by my lack of Welsh, and by my awkward mispronunciation? We had discussed the performance and the text prior to recording, and I made it explicit that I was not a Welsh speaker. Although I had some lessons at primary and secondary school, I did not continue learning the language as an adult, so what I would say during the performance would be very rudimentary, in fact crude.

Sioned Evans, who played the role of the language teacher in this piece, and I discussed the complexity of the paragraph that had been selected. Sioned remarked that this was not written in accessible, everyday language but in a more academic, authoritative style. Sioned also remarked that during the performance she was particularly fascinated by how, at points, I was able to pronounce Welsh words clearly and that perhaps this was because I

already had an ‘ear’ for the language, that it was already inside me. We talked about how little Welsh was spoken in the area I grew up in, although six miles away in Mold there was more of a feeling of Welshness, where the language could be heard more frequently spoken both by the elder generation and the youth. Perhaps this was due to there being a widely attended Welsh-speaking secondary school in the town as opposed to Flint, which only had an infant school.

Similar to the other *Twpsyn* pieces, this performance to video shows the struggle to connect to the words. Perhaps if I learnt the alphabet, my pronunciation would be more confident; however, I have purposely refrained from starting from these foundations, preferring to engage with the struggle of speaking the paragraph in some mystical belief that the words will simply take form naturally due to my Welsh ‘bloodline’. The reality is that my Welsh heritage is questionable, as my family came to Wales via Belgium and Switzerland. I became a Welsh learner constantly reminded of my deficiency.

Figure 14: Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn): Welsh Lesson (2018). Paul R Jones. Video Still. © Paul R Jones. All rights reserved.

Artistic Inquiry: *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Machine Translator* (2018)

Linguistic Transmutations

IDEOLEG PRYDEINDOD
Ideoleg prid'dain'dod

CYTUNAIS fod cymundod unclwm Prydeinig, ond dadleuais nad oes iddo glymiad a ffurfiant cenedl.
Kotin'ice vod kom'indod inclum predainig ond dag'lay'ice nad doys itho glumy'eyet a thirthiant kennydol.

Y gwir yw nad 'cenedl Brydeinig' sydd gennych ond rhywbeth arall sydd, thirthiad*yn fy marn i, fel lefain yn y blawd yn araf 'suro'r cwbl' yng Nghymru, a hwnnw yw'r syniad neu'r goel fod Prydain yn genedl.*
A gweer you nad 'kenadol bridainig' sidgainith ond prewbeth garrath sierth, earth than manni, fell le-vine in yun blawd in arath 'siro couple' un humrie, a hunnu er sunrad named goyel vod pred'dine an genedol.

Ar batrwm y gair 'Cymreictod', galwaf y cenedligrwydd honedig hwn yn 'Brydeindod'.
Ar batrim er guide 'cumrect'tod', galwath ee kenediktoy-th honeydig hon er 'bri-daindod'.

Effaith ***ladradaidd*** *y goel hon yw rhoi i ni'r Cymry wedd ffals ar y Brydain Unclwm, sef peri iddi ymrithio inni fel sylwedd cenedligol yn gwreiddiwn ynddo ar dir cyfartal â'r Sais.*
Ethfith ladradyth ee goyel hon ur roy in ner kumree werth thalss are ee bridyne inclum, serv perri ithint umrythiyo inni fell selwelth kennyligal en gravethiel un'tho ar dear kivantal a ra sythe.

Dygir i fod fel hyn fath o rhithfyd, hynny yw, o fyd ffurfiannol rithiol, ar ddaear Cymru.
Dugear ee fod fell hin tha o'rithfid, hunny you, o'veird thur've'annol, rith'iol vey'ar kumree.

A lle bo rhithfyd, y mae dynion yn agored i'w ***cyflyrru*** *mewn dulliau diarwybod iddynt, hyd at glafychu yn y diwedd o ddoluriau cuddiedig, niwrotig, nad oes modd eu dwyn i'r golau ond drwy 'geibio'.*
A cle bo rith'thid, un'my dunone my'gonned you cuth'flurry me'awn deardod'in'nant, hear dat glover'cle un'a dew'eth o thon'ei'eye kuthedig, newrotic, nad doys'more they doe ye gol'eye ond dre' gabe'e'or.

Responding to the performance *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Welsh Lesson*, I recorded Sioned speaking the paragraph. I then wrote down her reading using a self-designed phonetic structure, turning, for example, a *c* into a *k*, *dd* into *th* and *un* into *y*, and finding ways to

navigate the complexities of diphthongs in the Welsh language. I struggled trying to find a way to rearticulate the words, to imitate unfamiliar sounds, and to identify where to use stresses, how to control speech rate, and rhythmic patterns. The phonetic script became like a musical score. This process was repeated a couple of times until I felt I had, to a satisfactory degree, made the phonetically generated words 'sound' close to what I heard Sioned say in Welsh.

Analysis of Sounds

> *The Welsh Dunce, sat on an empty stage and recited the phonetically written opening paragraph of Ideoleg Prydeindod*…(Journal entry)

The first performance of *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Sound Speech* (2018) was held at the community pub Saith Seren in front of an invited audience. Saith Seren was selected as it has a strong mandate to promote Welsh language and culture in Wrexham. The pub runs Welsh language lessons every Monday and provides Welsh entertainment in the form of a Welsh quiz night and music evenings. It also supports local microbreweries.

During this performance of *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Sound Speech* I found that the phonetical structure broke up each word, making my pronunciation robotic. In fact, rather than sounding Welsh, it felt as if this approach created more distance from the original passage. Why did I approach the work in this way? I was trying to sound more Welsh, trying to find a way to make the words pronounceable to my English tongue. The issue with this approach was that much depended on my sensitivity to the Welsh speaker's pronunciation.

During this performance, I felt that the original text was lost. What I had created was some other text, an imagined translation, an alien language, which at points was connected to Welsh but at others was completely different, more so than when I tried to read the actual

text. This echoed the video performance *Wälschen* (2010), as described previously, and the sound poetry of the Dadaist Hugo Ball, in which speech becomes less about meaning and structure and more to do with emphasising its phonetical plasticity and tonality.

Machine Translator

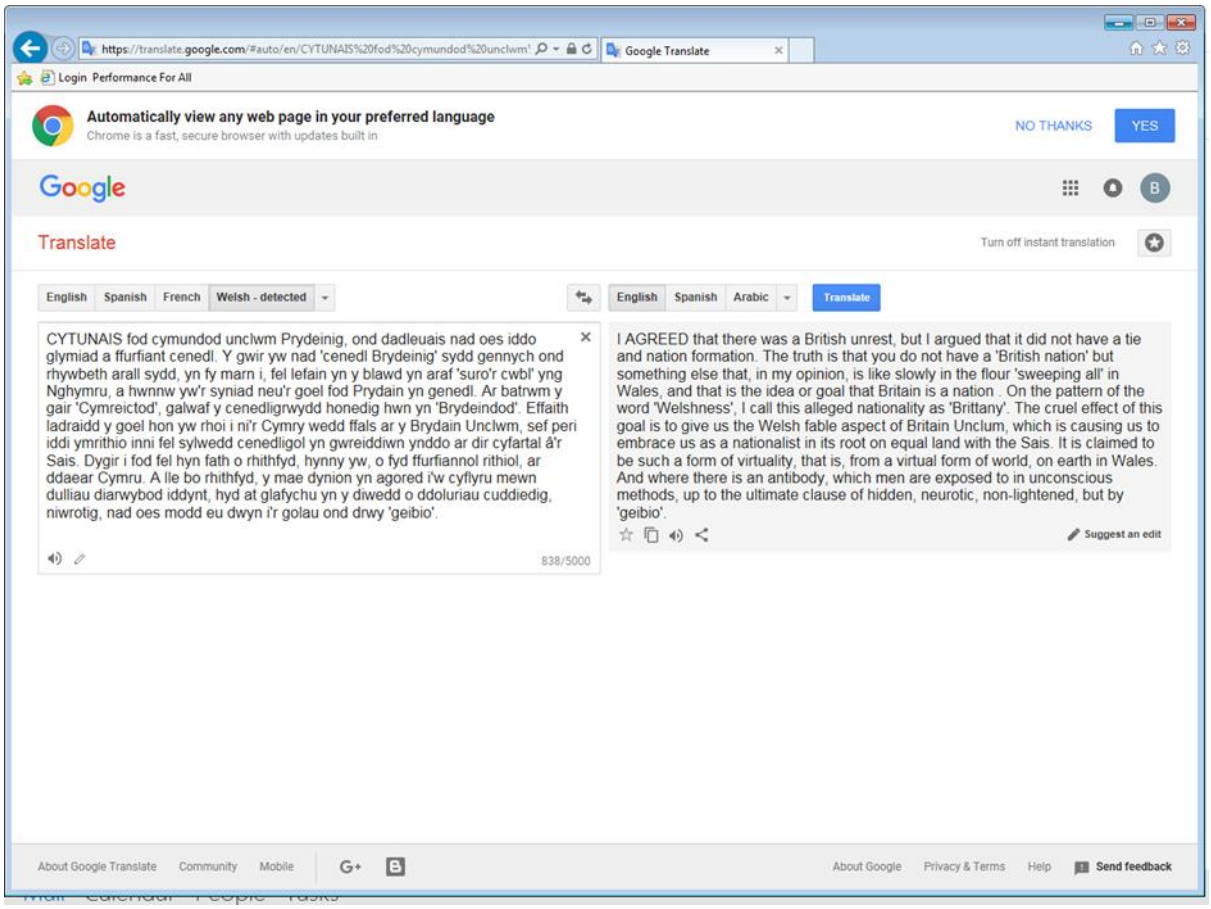

Figure 15: Google Translate Welsh>English Screenshot

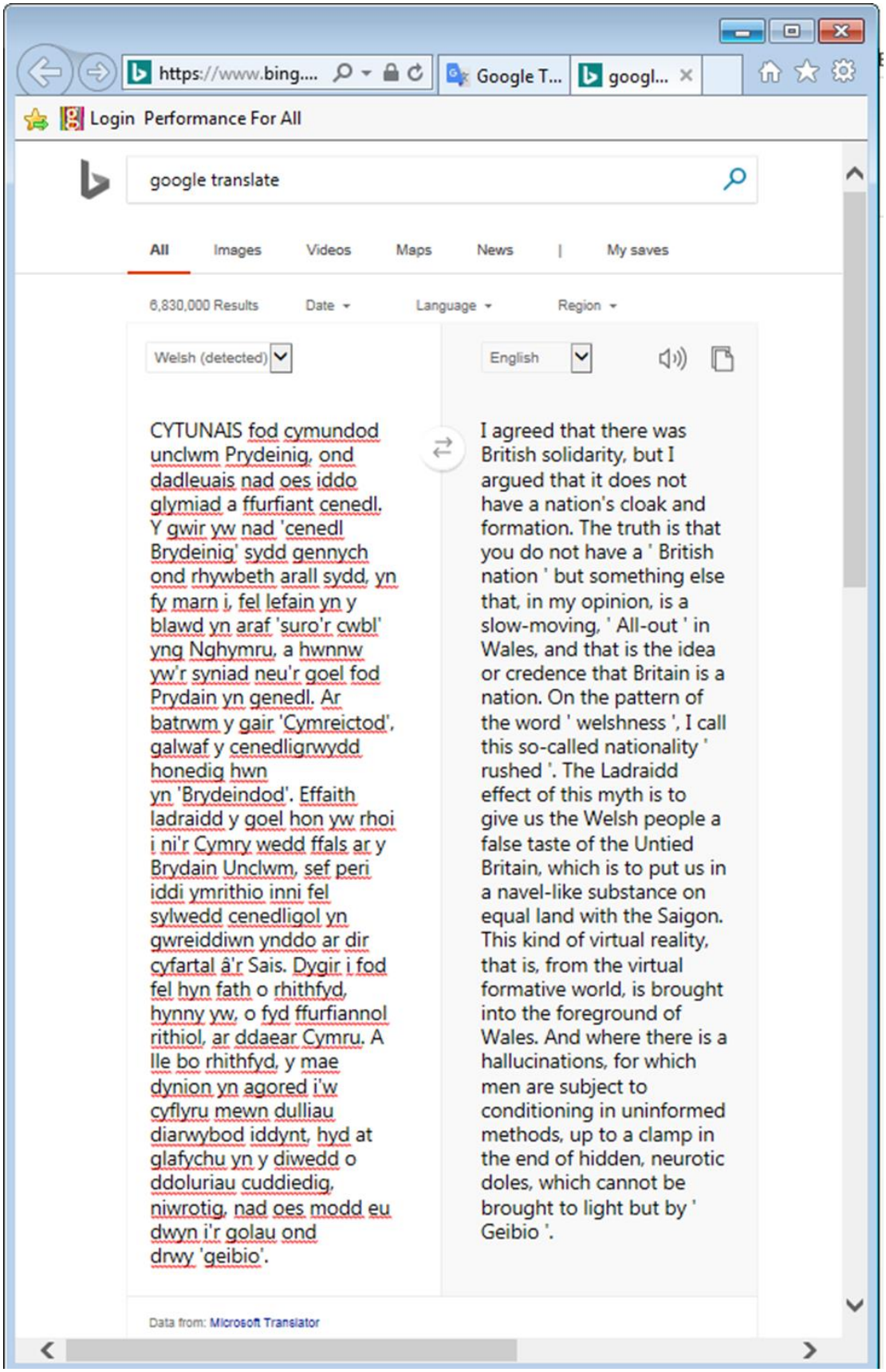

Figure 16: Microsoft Translator Welsh>English Screenshot

David Bellos states in his book *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? The Amazing Adventure of Translation* (2011) that 'you should never use GT (Google Translate)[26] to translate into a language you do not know very well. Use it only to translate into a language in which you are sure you can recognize nonsense' (Bellos, 2011, p. 265).

Approaching the language project from a different perspective, I questioned what if I were to use software freely available on the web to see how this paragraph could be translated into English. Knowing that such freely accessible software never gives an accurate translation added to the absurdity of the process. I discovered that the mechanical, inaccurate translation retained the obscurity of the original text, with its complexities, use of metaphors and subtlety of the language. Although operating through powerful algorithms and with access to millions of translation documentation, the software could not compete with a human translator, with a good knowledge of the language and the larger context in which the paragraph resided.

For *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Machine Translator* (2018), I was not interested in seeking assistance from a professional translator. I was interested in a process of misreading and exploring how such a process could make the paragraph as impenetrable as the Welsh version. In this way, even when in a familiar language, I maintained the quixotic mission of the previous *Welsh Dunce (Twpsym)* pieces.

[26] Google's free service instantly translates words, phrases, and web pages between English and over 100 other languages. https://translate.google.com/

I AGREED that there was a British unrest, but I argued that it did not have a tie and nation formation. The truth is that you do not have a 'British nation' but something else that, in my opinion, is like slowly in the flour 'sweeping all' in Wales, and that is the idea or goal that Britain is a nation. On the pattern of the word 'Welshness', I call this alleged nationality as 'Brittany'. The cruel effect of this goal is to give us the Welsh fable aspect of Britain Unclum, which is causing us to embrace us as a nationalist in its root on equal land with the Sais. It is claimed to be such a form of virtuality, that is, from a virtual form of world, on earth in Wales. And where there is an antibody, which men are exposed to in unconscious methods, up to the ultimate clause of hidden, neurotic, non-lightened, but by 'geibio'.

Figure 17: Google Translate English translation Version 1 of opening paragraph to Ideoleg Prydeindod, (p...) (Jones, 1966)

Unclum was not translated by Google Translate when entered as part of the full text. When placed separately, *y Brydain Unclwm* read as 'The Untied Britain'. The word g*eibio* remained untranslated. *Sais* also remained in its Welsh form, but when placed separately into Google Translate became the English 'know'. I then pasted in *cyfartal â'r Sais*, which translated as 'equal to the English'. However, in this exercise I felt that I was attempting to find a perfect translation of the paragraph. The notion of words remaining in Welsh is interesting as it makes them concrete, that is, there can be no substitute for these in English. They are deeply imbedded into the Welsh language.

Experimenting with both Google Translate[27] and Microsoft Translator[28] created different versions of the paragraph as seen in Figures 18 and 19. Each piece of software changed the content of the paragraph, both creating a moment of nonsense and absurdity.

I agreed that there was British solidarity, but I argued that it does not have a nation's cloak and formation. The truth is that you do not have a ' British nation' but something else that, in my opinion, is a slow moving, ' All out ' in Wales, and that is the idea or credence that Britain is a nation. On the pattern of the word ' welshness' , I call this so called nationality ' rushed ' . The Ladraidd effect of this myth is to give us the Welsh people a false taste of the Untied Britain, which is to put us in a navel like substance on

[27] https://translate.google.com/
[28] https://www.bing.com/Translator

equal land with the Saigon. This kind of virtual reality, that is, from the virtual formative world, is brought into the foreground of Wales. And where there is a hallucinations, for which men are subject to conditioning in uninformed methods, up to a clamp in the end of hidden, neurotic doles, which cannot be brought to light but by ‘ Geibio ’.

Figure 18: Microsoft Translator English translation Version 1 of opening paragraph to Ideoleg Prydeindod, (p...) (Jones, 1966)

As a way to develop the complexities of the text, I switched the translation from English to Welsh to English five times. This created interesting versions of the paragraph, changing the Welsh whilst making the English read more logically, but with elements that remained rather odd.

Cytunais fod undod Prydeinig, ond Dadleuais nad oes gan y genedl gydbenderfynu a ffurfio. Y gwir yw nad oes gennych ‘ genedl Brydeinig ’, ond yr hyn a gredaf sy’n fudiad araf, ‘ pob allan ’ yng Nghymru, a dyna’r syniad neu’r myth mai cenedl yw Prydain. Ar batrwm y gair ‘ Cymreictod ’, galwaf y genedl ‘frysiog ’ hon, fel y’i gelwir. Ladraidd effaith y myth hwn yw rhoi blas ffug i ni o Brydain ddideitl, sef ein rhoi mewn sylwedd morthwyl ar dir cyfartal â’r Sais. Mae’r math yma o rhith-wirionedd, hynny yw, o’r Virtualrhydd byd ffurfiannol, yn cael ei ddwyn i’r blaendir yng Nghymru. A lle ceir rhithweledigaethau, mae dynion yn ddarostyngedig i gyflyru mewn dulliau anwybodus, hyd at gladdfa ar ddiwedd Dolau cudd, a dim ond trwy ‘ gloddio ’ y gellir dwyn y goleuni i’r golwg.

Figure 19: Microsoft Translator Welsh> English>Welsh>English>Welsh version

The translation software changed the Welsh in response to the translated English versions, so that the original text remained obscure. I began to wonder if by using this process I was moving towards a more accurate account of the original text’s meaning. Of course, I could never truly know if this was the case without seeking out advice from a Welsh speaker with a good knowledge of Jones’ writings. This, I felt, would demystify the text too much. There was a distance to using web-based translation that allowed me space creatively to explore the limits of how an English speaker attempts to ‘unlock’ Jones’ text, to find unconventional ways to immerse oneself in the depth of meaning of the book’s general argument that I felt the opening paragraph of the *Ideoleg Prydeindod* chapter may possess and reflect.

There was a limit to the changes that the computer translation would make. This was reached when the translation remained the same even after repeating the switching process a number of times. The final English translation was as follows:

I agreed that there was British unity, but I argued that the nation does not have co-decision and formation. The reality is that you do not have a ‘ British nation ’, but what I believe is a slow, ‘ all out ’ movement in Wales, and that is the idea or myth that Britain is a nation. On the pattern of the word ‘ welshness ’, I call this so-called ‘hasty ’ nation. Ladraidd The effect of this myth is to give us a false flavour of untitled Britain, which is to put us in a morthy substance on equal land with the Saigon. This kind of virtual reality, that is, of the formative world Virtualrhydd, is brought to the foreground in Wales. And where there are hallucinations, men are subject to conditioning in ignorant methods, up to a clamp at the end of latent Dolau, and the light can only be brought into sight by ‘ digging ’.

Figure 20: Examples of Final Version of English Translation using Microsoft Translator

Bellos observes that translation, similar to art practice, has ambiguous borders, and that each text is vulnerable to mediation (Bellos, 2011). As well as trying to strive for an accurate translation of a text, the process of translation can lead to creating something ‘new’ in another tongue (Bellos, 2011) and pseudo-translation (Gideon, 1984). Both the *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Sound Speech* and the *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Machine Translator* work in a similar way in that they both distance themselves from the original text. This in turn distances the reader from Jones’ statements.

By attempting to phonetically sound out the paragraph spoken by a Welsh speaker, the text created for *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Sound Speech* created something alien, yet familiar in sound, with definite Welsh words clearly formed amongst what could be interpreted as esoteric or a scattering of nonsense. In both investigations I purposefully attempt to play a role of alternating between reaching inside whilst forever existing outside of the Welsh text.

The Emancipation of the Twpsyn

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991), Jacques Rancière tells of how a lecturer in French Literature, Joseph Jacotot, developed an instructional technique in order to teach the French language to Flemish-speaking students. However, his problem was that he could not speak Flemish. With no universal language between both the teacher and the students, how could the students' learning of the French language be resolved? The answer came in the form of what Rancière terms the 'thing in common' (Rancière, 1991, p. 2), in this case, a bilingual translation of a French novel, *Télémaque,* based on the adventures of the son of Odysseus. Using this book, the Flemish students were able to learn French by means of the Flemish translation. This linguistic experiment was successful. The realisation that 'one can teach what one doesn't know if the student is emancipated, that is to say, if he is obliged to use his own intelligence' (Rancière, 1991, p. 15) rendered the teacher's powers of explication debateable. The experiment opposed the technique of 'enforced stultification' of the learning process by the teacher (Rancière, 1991, p. 7) so that the learner remained subordinate to the teacher (Rancière, 1991, p. 13).

My reason for including this description of Jacotot's experiment and Rancière's analysis of it within the chapter lies in the concept of the duality between the learner's reaching for emancipation and the teacher's capacity to make the learner appear ridiculous, foolish and stupid and create settings that are restrictive and tedious in order to explicate their power. The work generated for *Welsh Dunce/ Twpsyn* (2018) reverberates within this conflictual territory. Initially comparable to a Victorian school punishment, the ostracised slow learner advances towards the use of translation software as a mode of self-learning, applying Google Translate as the modern day *Télémaque*, so to speak.

Deterritorialisations

My approach to the Welsh language could be described as an anxiety as I do not have the confidence or a skill for learning languages. The character of the dunce allows me to displace this anxiety through the object of the 'other' who is exposed and prepared to convey their ignorance, even if this is staged through ridicule and embarrassment. However, throughout the research practice there is evidence of wanting to connect, to find empathy with the text, the language. As Stephen D. Krashen describes in *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning* (1988), 'the ability to put oneself in another's shoes, is also predicted to be relevant to acquisition in that the empathic person may be the one who is able to identify more easily with speakers of a target audience and thus accept their input for language acquisition' (Krashen, 1988, p. 23). Partly, this is what the dunce is trying to achieve throughout the work.

'How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own?' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 19). Although more directly focused upon the immigrant's linguistic plight that is both about deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation and the friction between language and power, I read this in relation to how the dunce is deterritorialised through language. The dunce both embarks upon a flight from their own language and extends towards bringing the unfamiliar expressions of the Welsh language closer. The dunce's own language is displaced by 'giving themselves over to the articulation of sounds, the mouth, tongue, and the teeth deterritorialize' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 19). The deterritorialised dunce creates sounds, with the aim of achieving reterritorialisation, towards the mythical, cultural, historical and spiritual.

How does it feel to be illiterate in connecting to one's native cultural voice, to be disconnected? Holly Lesko and Thenmozhi Soundararajan write that we are all living our stories in the world. The stories are produced not just through distinct aptitudes and character but are also shaped by 'a host of political, cultural, familial, corporate, and civic narratives' (Lesko & Soundararajan, 2015, p. 100). These stories are significant in allowing the individual to recognise and describe themselves within internal and external narratives. The seeking of meaning and belonging crafts a collective vision of the world, and as individuals, we interconnect and form and share value systems (Lesko & Soundararajan, 2015, p. 100). This is one of the ambitions of both the practice and writing in the chapter: to become open to reflective opportunities originating from a subjective, personal place of relevance and experience articulated towards creating a context for connecting to a shared experience (Lesko & Soundararajan, 2015).

The absurdity of the Welsh dunce's quest begins to be about trying to seek out answers in Jones' *Pyrdeindod* that are unattainable to a non-Welsh speaker. The performances expose my ignorance of the Welsh language in my failure in language attainment both in school and as an adult. This creates a divide in terms of my connection to Welsh culture and belonging to a 'people', that is, authentically sharing a 'deep rooted' 'national heritage' and belonging to a distinctive 'land'.

In my practice I use autobiographical and autoethnographical methods in order to explore the effects of how identity is enmeshed in the geographical. The need to situate identity through a criterion of the Welsh/British dichotomy becomes important in terms of the measures one uses to declare oneself one or the other. By declaring myself British, do I jeopardise the criteria that would classify me as Welsh? Or does one invent a new set of

criteria for an identity at the geographical border? I feel that the negotiation of cultural identity, from a non-Welsh-speaking perspective, is problematised due to the fact that my first language is the 'colonial' language. So how does one then situate a sense of belonging and heritage if language is used to divide, whether knowingly or unknowingly? When in the company of Welsh speakers, I am very much aware of not feeling quite as Welsh as they are and so I turn towards a more composite model of English and Welsh cultural markers that are constructed and modified by the proximity of the geographical borderland, a dual identity, in the words of John Osmond (Osmond, 1985).

CHAPTER 4: Frontier Territory – Towards a Conclusion

Please click here for presentation of practice documentation for **FRONTIER TERRITORY**

In this chapter I discuss the exhibition *Frontier Territory* held at Aberystwyth Arts Centre (AAC) during December 2018 and January 2019. I describe the thinking around its conception and the curatorial decisions, reflecting on its impact in regard to the research inquiry. This short chapter is supported by additional documentation that includes journal entries of initial ideas, the proposal submitted for exhibition to the Visual Arts Manager at AAC, lists of works, invoices, information panel texts, experimental drawings and the final exhibition model showing placement of works, promotional materials and recordings of related symposium proceedings.

The main purpose of this write-up is to evaluate the exhibition and tease out how it assisted me in forming conclusions drawn from questions raised in the previous chapters. I will not linger on re-describing artworks that have previously been examined in other chapters, instead focusing on their impact within the exhibition. However, I will introduce works that formed part of this exhibition but are not examined elsewhere in the thesis.

Objectives that I consider during this write-up are:

1. To investigate how artistic inquiry can be assembled to form a coherent body of work.
2. To evaluate the limits and potential of artistic inquiry in relation to the main aims of the PhD.

Some Background Information

During an annual monitoring meeting in March 2017, I proposed that the practice-based part of the research could take the form of an exhibition, perhaps not as part of the final outcomes, but as a way to bring all the artworks together in one place and see how they worked as a whole. Later that afternoon, I was sitting with the then AAC Visual Arts Manager (Curator), Steffan Hughes-Jones, and we discussed the idea that I submit a proposal for a show in Gallery 2 of the Arts Centre. I felt that Gallery 2, a reasonable space in terms of dimensions and configuration, was appropriate to act as a depository for bringing specific visualisations of ideas explored during the PhD together in one place.

The proposal I put forward followed the overarching inquiry of the research at that moment, questioning how art practice makes visible the political, cultural and social systems that govern territory. I emphasised that the exhibition would include artworks executed at the border between Wales and England, looking at identity, specifically Anglo-Welsh identity, and its relationship at such a fluid and ambiguous border. This proposal was accepted during the change-over between Hughes-Jones and Ffion Rhys, who became the new AAC Visual Arts Manager in 2018.

The AAC exhibition gave me an opportunity to bring together the different strands of my artistic inquiries, and visually map how each one connected to the whole PhD. The curators at AAC granted me full control over how the work was to be presented. They acted more as a point of contact for technical support and developing promotional materials. Initially, I did not expect this to be the case, but welcomed the autonomy it gave, as I was able to consider the gallery space itself as an extension of the artwork. Of course, there were continuous dialogues between Ffion and the gallery technician in terms of what was possible and

achievable in the timeframe of the exhibition, but the reality was that I acted as artist and curator. There are many examples of the artist-curator, an insightful reading of which can be found in Elena Filipovic's *The Artist as Curator: An Anthology* (2017). She cites artists as diverse as Gustave Courbert, Marcel Duchamp, Yves Klein, Marcel Broodthaers and Mark Leckey creating exhibitions of either their own work or that of others. Although not aimed at testing the limits of what constitutes an exhibition, as many of these artists have done, the independence allowed me to consider it as part of the art-making process, in fact, as a medium itself (Filipovic, 2017, p. 8).

Towards a Narrative…

The title of the show was taken from a sub-heading in the written element of the research. For me, it described the spirit of the research inquiry, in the way I was on a journey of discovery, an expedition. I was exploring geographical and cultural markers, looking at my own sense of identity from a border zone. Like a character in a Casper David Friedrich painting who stands at the edge of a geographical and psychological hinterland, my aim was to create an image of a frontier territory that was to be discovered, conquered and mapped.

During the selection process, I rediscovered an old Ordnance Survey map, dated 1926, given to me by a colleague who knew of my interest in borders. The map showed the county border line between Oswestry in Shropshire and Wales. My fascination with this map lay in the fact that a large proportion of it was blank. All the detail was focused on the Oswestry side, with the landscape beyond irrelevant to the map's purpose. 'They erased Wales', I decried, 'beyond the border line it might as well be the end of the world' (Journal Entry, Aug 18 – Mar 19). The places and people who live beyond the function of this map had been erased. The blankness denotes what José Rabasa (1993) would argue is the conception of

'the "Other" as absence of culture' (Rabasa, 1993, p. 42; cited in Massey, 2015, p. 122). I later considered this blank space on the map as similar to the emptiness of a gallery space, the whiteness of its walls waiting to be occupied by artworks. However, those clean, pure walls and polished floor spaces, when you look closely enough, remain populated with the histories of previous exhibitions: pilot holes, pencil marks, scuffed surfaces, plaster filler – all the palimpsests of interactions that faintly show through to the most recent layer of white emulsion paint whose intention is to erase.

When looking at a journal entry made at the time, I refer to this blank space as a vast nothingness to be projected onto. The nothingness of the map acted as an invitation. Its surface space allowed for what Doreen Massey describes as an 'openness' to becoming (Massey, 2005/2015, p. 21). I saw this exercise as an opportunity to re-imagine my position, a way to become an outsider, reading it as a space open to new narratives: a space to question, to fantasise, to invent, to get lost in, to find oneself and in which to be present. It was from that county border line that I positioned myself and imagined crossing into the unknown, the void.

Practicalities

In the essay 'Multiple Authorship' (2013), Boris Groys notes that an exhibition can be read as an act of artistic creation, which results from a series of choice, decisions and selections (Groys, 2013, p. 97). Deciding on which works to include in the exhibition was difficult in terms of the large amount of output produced over the course of six years of research. In what ways could the different strands of the artistic inquiries be brought together in order to create a sense of cohesion? My initial thoughts had been to include as much of the work as possible. Such an approach would have included all the research journals, sketches and

associated literature in the form of a small library of books that influenced my thinking. Gray and Malins' (2004) recommendation that researcher-artists could submit their output in the form of an exposition, where unresolved and completed artworks are presented, influenced this initial idea. This approach would typically include all the background work, the mapping of the research process, the failures and changing of direction – in essence, the messiness of research (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 168), allowing for openness and transferability in terms of the intended criteria of evaluation as directed by the aims of the PhD. At the time, I was also attentive to the *educational turn* as a curatorial practice.

Explored by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, the editors of *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010), this approach to curating stresses the pedagogical flavour of an exhibition, making the gallery function more like a classroom, emphasising it as a site of knowledge, of learning. Distinguishing itself from the more traditional understanding of the viewer as passive, this approach to exhibition emphasised the activation of the audience members.

The difficulty in selecting your own artwork is that you want to show everything. As I made and remade the selection, I realised that I could exhibit this work in any number of ways. Perhaps I could just focus on language, borders or flags. Any of these areas could have been made into a standalone exhibition. However, this would mean not treating the opportunity I had been given as a way of presenting an overview of six years' research. At one point in the design process, I started to think that exploring flags, borders and language as territorial and cultural markers might be too different from each other. Would they operate better as individual exhibits? However, I decided that this would defeat the challenge I had set myself. There had to be a way that these could be brought together.

I made a scale model of the gallery to help me visualise the work in the space. This was to help draw out certain technical and practice-related questions that included the following: if needed, could additional display walls be erected? Could poster prints be used to cover all the walls? What size monitors should be used for video work? Discussions with the Visual Arts Manager at this point became important, as they acted as ways to think out loud about how the exhibition could be constructed. What really helped was their openness to my ideas. Ffion encouraged me to pursue the more technically challenging aspects of my proposals, such as building a black box to show video in or projecting out into the tilted ceiling of the Arts Centre seating area. The immersive character of the exhibition took shape through a sharing of ideas, emerging via growing trust and continuing professionalism between myself and the team at AAC.

Journal entries from the time prior to meeting with Ffion to discuss the technical requirements for the exhibition record an awareness that what was selected should be more limited. Essentially, I was trying to find a narrative, that is, by thinking about Gallery 2 as a space of encounter, about how a visitor to the exhibition could 'read' the work as they walked through it. I began to question how the presentation of the works could act like the flags, borders and language chapters in the written element of the research. I started to visualise how certain works could be hung, and on which walls. I was aware that this would not be a typical exhibition for this space, which is designed for wall-based paintings and photography. This exhibition would include a mixture of media, including video, digital poster prints, flags and maps.

Back in the studio, I started to devise a floor plan of the space, in which the space of the gallery became as integral as the introduced works. I began to experiment with using the

colour palette and abstract shapes present in the flags on the gallery walls. Colour schemes became important in terms of being used as a way to contain separate parts of the work. For example, areas were painted black in keeping with part of the colour scheme for the *Republic of Flintshire* project. Between these two works I placed *Hiraeth (Darn #2)* (2017), with its banner picking up the black and yellow of the *RoF* works. A similar consideration can be seen in the red right-angled triangle painted on the wall showing the video work *Rendition (Eryr Wen),* and bracketed by the *Prydeindod* banner and the *Baner Llecynnau,* by which it was influenced.

I decided against the construction of a *black box* for video projection. When looking at the model of the gallery, I realised that this type of build would need to be quite substantial and would dominate the space. Instead, I opted for flat-screen, high-definition monitors and two 4:3 ratio screen monitors obtained from an obsolete VHS editing suite. As the monitors could be wall-mounted or placed on narrow plinths, it gave me the opportunity to allow the works to have 'breathing space'.

One of the more problematic areas of the gallery space was the long wall that faced out over the main hall of the Arts Centre. This wall, of approximately 12 metres, acted as a narrow walkway between the gallery and the adjacent theatre entrance. In my view, any art presented on this wall tended not to work, as the narrow walkway did not allow the viewer to be able to step back far enough to see the work from varied distances and angles. I had not seen any exhibition of work in this part of the gallery that had successfully utilised the space. Two possibilities for utilising this area included making and installing very small artworks, such as a series of photography pieces no bigger than five by seven inches, or else to leave it. I decided that putting images on this wall was not an option I favoured. So

instead, I suggested that the wall be painted in a striking colour that had an impact when viewed from the hall below. After exploring various possible colours, I settled on creating an abstract image that referenced the *Baner Llecynnau* that I aimed to display inside the main gallery area. This made the wall itself into an artwork. I was very conscious of how the outside of the gallery space would act as a spectacle, a way to draw visitors into the exhibition. I also knew that the colours and design of the flag would be provocative, due to the similarities with rebellion flags such as the flag of Kashmir Independence, the Republican Rebellion flag of Brunei, Southeast Asia, the Arab Liberation flag (flag of Hejaz), and the Czech Republic flag (since 1993).[29]

The concept of heterotopias was present from the very beginning of imagining the exhibition space. Without really knowing it at the time, I was creating an installation that could act as a territory, like an enclave of some fictional country. Could this be a representation of some imagined state? At this point I moved away from thinking of what I was doing as a form of exposition. Rather than acting only as a depository for the research, the exhibition began to be read as a visualisation of how art has the power to create other worlds, alternative states, within the capsule of a gallery space. It is important to consider heterotopias as spaces that are both real and imagined. As Tompkins notes, the real and imagined create dialogues between one another (Tompkins, 2014, p. 26). They are significant in their ability to be 'experimental zones for possibilities', critically functioning as locations that shape and contest cultural and political perspectives (Tompkins, 2014, p. 27).

[29] The artwork's ability to affect was confirmed when Dr. Simon Roberts, when first visiting the exhibition, mistakenly thought that what was painted on the wall was the Palestinian flag. His initial response was to read the work as a provocative gesture.

Walking the Territory

On entering the exhibition, the first work to the right was the video piece *Prydeindod (The Walk)*, and next to this was the *Prydeindod* banner, *Rendition (Eryr Wen)* on a monitor, with the *Baner Llecynnau* to its left. The video *A Political Broadcast (RoF)* was shown on a 3:4 monitor placed on a black plinth. This was followed by *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn): Welsh Lesson* on a monitor hung in a portrait format. *Hiraeth (Darn #2)* (2017) acted as a feature for the far end wall. To the left of this, *The Republic of Flintshire Manifesto* was pasted to the pillar opposite its related *RoF* video piece. Another 3:4 ratio monitor displaying the *Y Wal* (2017) video followed this. The plinth for this was low to the floor. Finally, a billboard-sized poster of *The Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn) Talks to a Leek About the Threat to Welsh Culture* (2018) was presented on its own.

With the aim of making the hanging more asymmetrical, my intention was that the works be hung at various heights. For example, the flags were suspended high above, with the widescreen monitors and posters placed at eye level. The banner for *Hiraeth (Darn #2)* and the monitor showing *Y Wal,* which is a flyover video of the border between Wales and England, as seen from above, I placed on a low plinth, closer to floor level. Overall, the hanging created a sense of movement and rhythm, treating the staging of the works as if it were a painterly composition. Finally, there was the abstract painting on the outer wall referencing *Baner Llecynnau.*

Contentious Selections

The final selection of works was decided upon due to their audience accessibility. What I mean by this is that they felt more formally resolved and they could be understood more like 'artworks' than other outputs of the practice. I would argue that these works

epitomised the essence of my thinking through making at various points in the research. Even at this point of finalisation, I was still very much aware that I was probing the concept of an exhibition/exposition model.

As part of the selected works, I introduced some that I had not previously discussed in detail in the complementary writing. These I felt were more aggressively antagonistic in nature. I was concerned that *Rendition: Eryr Wen (White Eagle)* (2016) and *A Political Broadcast (Republic of Flintshire Assignment)* (2014) could be read as contentious given the fact that these works respond to texts (Thomas, 1973; Hearne, 1982) that were themselves quite incendiary at the time they were written.

For example, I would argue that *Rendition: Eryr Wen (White Eagle)* particularly pushes towards a more forceful antagonism that is less 'soft' than the kind I apply in other works, as it mimics a call for insurgency. In hindsight, the making of this work was about how far I might personally want to go in terms of doing something that was aggressively antagonistic. Gone is the humour, replaced by an outbreak of expressive imagery that includes hooded 'detainees', video game renderings of explosions and rifles, and spinning, computer-generated 3D slogans directly attributed to the Free Wales Army, one reading 'Fe godwn ni eto' ('we will rise again'). This piece of work takes its title from the Free Wales Army (Byddin Rhyddid Cymru) emblem, the Eryr Wen (the Snowdon Eagle). The voice over by Welsh activist and former FWA leader Julian Cayo-Evans is an edited version of his introduction to *The March of the White Eagles: Marching Songs of the Free Wales Army*, an album released on CD in 2008 from recordings made in 1981. The video uses a mixture of green screen technologies and dance to project a hyperbolic visualisation suggestive of the promotional films produced by ISIS. There is something unsettling about the image of the black-hooded

figure in white overalls, performing a series of quasi-martial arts moves, or Sattriya dance, against a background of an imaginary flag, a chevron of red, with a white and green horizontal divide, hinting at a likeness to the Welsh National Flag. The actions of the performer are punctuated by explosions to the rhythm of Dholak and Khol drums.

Initially, I was anxious about exhibiting *Rendition: Eryr Wen (White Eagle)* and asked Ffion to view it so that she could make a judgement as to whether this should be included. My concern for these works lay in their proximity to extreme nationalist ideologies that have become so prevalent during the period of conducting the research. In a world that is characterised by a politics of resentment[30] (Fukuyama, 2018) and includes the rise of nationalist and religious politics, and the growing assertiveness of authoritarian leaders on the global stage, I feared that the work could, with its focus on a Welsh sense of identity, endorse nationalist sentiments, or more critically, fundamentalist views. This is not my intention. In works such as *Rendition: Eryr Wen (White Eagle)* or *A Political Broadcast (Republic of Flintshire Assignment)*, I am not trying to start some actual revolution or create dissent. Rather, I utilise this imagery in the context of art practice; they are critical engagements that aim to draw out imaginative, alternative narratives to how identity is constructed, situated, established and unfixed when focused at sites of ambiguity. After viewing the work, Ffion believed this work would be acceptable within the context of the show and the gallery setting.

[30] Fukuyama examines identity through thymos, isothymia and megalothymia. Thymos is related to how one craves dignity, isothymia is the need to feel respected as an equal to others and megalothymia is the desire to be superior to others (Fukuyama, 2018, p. xiii). Most forms of national identity within liberal democracies, Fukuyama observes, aim for a degree of dignity and respect (Fukuyama, 2018, p. xiii). At a most fundamental level, people wish to be recognised by others, to feel a sense of worth. When this is denied them, people feel angered and marginalised. The issue with megalothymia lies in the fact that 'for every person recognized as superior, far more people are seen as inferior and do not receive any public recognition of their human worth' (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 21).

Situating the Symposium

In this section, I discuss the symposium 'Ant*agonistics*: Identity, Nationhood and Territory', which took place on 23 January 2019 in Gallery 2 of Aberystwyth Arts Centre (AAC).

Ffion had asked if I would like to have an opening event and put on a workshop as part of the exhibition. Thinking about the various approaches to running such events, I proposed a talk that would explore the themes raised in the artworks. As someone who finds private views a rather uncomfortable affair, I felt a talk would be more constructive in terms of helping to enhance the production of knowledge generated by the exhibition exercise. I also felt that an event at the end rather than the beginning would be another way to play with the exhibition format. In my experience of such things, galleries tended to have artists' talks close to the opening or midway through an exhibition.

I proposed to Ffion that the format of a symposium might be an interesting way to approach this event and could include speakers from various academic disciplines, including art theory, politics, Welsh studies, sociology and human geography. This was influenced by the types of symposiums organised by Documenta, the Tate and e-flux. By playing with the concept of an exhibition as a site of educational encounter, I thought that a symposium could act as a platform for the academics to present their research to a different public, one outside their specific discipline. This approach would also expand the themes and concerns in the PhD. Like those events set up at e-flux and Documenta, I envisaged the exhibition space as a zone where political, social and cultural themes could be confronted and discussed.

With the event lasting for a duration of two hours, I decided that inviting three academics was enough to allow a broad exploration of the topics and some interesting debate. Each

speaker would be given twenty minutes, with time allowed for the audience to join in the discussion. I wanted there to be a convivial atmosphere, with drinks and food being served throughout.

Situating the Process

I drafted a description of the symposium that was emailed to invited speakers. This text was later edited to form part of the promotional material for the event. Thankfully, this part of the process was managed by Ffion, using social media and posters in order to stimulate interest. The promotional material aimed at putting forward a provocation. The title, 'Ant*agonistics*: Identity, Nationhood and Territory', identified three areas of concern within the PhD itself and would help to inform the audience about what was to be explored within the symposium. I purposely played with the visual representation of the term 'Ant*agonistics*', creating a conflictual effect between Mouffe's definitions for antagonism (enemy) and agonism (adversary), with '*Cymry or Welsh? Brydeinig or British?*' acting as a further provocation.

With no budget, I was limited as to which academics I could invite. It was impossible to have speakers who had to travel any great distance, so my options centred on academics I knew at Aberystwyth University and Glyndŵr University. There were a large number of amazing scholars I could approach in these institutions whose research chimed with that highlighted in the exhibition. Dr. Roger Owen, Lecturer in Theatre and Theatre Production in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University, has been constantly supportive and has often helped me navigate the writings of J.R. Jones, especially the book *Prydeindod*. I met Dr. Simon Gwyn Roberts, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media at the University of Chester, whilst studying for my MA at this institute. I originally

approached Simon due to a shared interest in borders, particularly in terms of the Wales/England and Welsh/Anglo-Welsh language disputes. My third invited speaker was Dr. Anwen Elias, Reader in Politics, Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University. I was familiar with Anwen's work on regionalism, nationalism and identity and felt that her research would complement that of Simon's, which focused on both local and international identities and readings of borders as zones of encounter. It was unfortunate that two weeks before the symposium was to take place, Dr. Elias emailed to say that due to a change of circumstances, she would not be able to participate. This was a disappointment as their input would have been incredibly valuable to the event. However, such things happen.

Situating the Presentations

In my own presentation I aimed to link together the artworks in the show, emphasising the contexts in which I had started my inquiry. I wanted to use the symposium as an opportunity to put forward three points: firstly, how the practice was influenced by the autoethnographic, that is, a study established through personal experience that is expanded to encompass wider social, political and cultural perspectives; secondly, my definition of heterotopic friction as a method by which to visually explore themes of identity and territory; and thirdly, how the book *Prydeindod* was a significant influence on most of the work on display. In preparing for the talk, I had reorganised material from each chapter of the PhD. It was split into three sections (language and identity, nationalism and identity and finally borders and identity) that examined works in the exhibition. As an overview of the research and practice, my address was more general than those of the invited speakers. This was intentional as I wanted to act more as a catalyst, promoting an overview of the themes that Owen and Roberts would develop.

Roger Owen's paper on J.R. Jones and the nature of identity in Wales resonated directly with the research inquiry, particularly in terms of addressing the context behind the artwork exploring identity from my position as an Anglo-Welsh person. Owen's reading of Jones positioned him as a protagonist who claimed that a British identity was a fallacy. In reality, Britain had no universal language (English belonging to the English nation) and therefore national identity was reliant on a language claim.

Two critical terms that Owen examined in Jones' text that facilitated further thinking about the contexts of my research inquiry were *angof* and *troedle*. A complicated term to translate into English, a*ngof*, for Owen, pushes beyond its literal translation of 'non-memory' into its relationship to forgetting. Time is a binding element of identity and *angof* relates to time. In Jones' writing, this a*ngof* acts as the practice of forgetting, of drifting into not existing. Owen asked how this happened – by doing or becoming what? Another problem is that one cannot be aware of *angof*, even if it can be named. Like time, *angof*, Owen proposed, is always receding. Owen's discussion of *angof* was centred around Jones' argument of the crisis of Welsh identity as an internalised struggle.

Owen translated *troedle* as a 'foot place'. This connection to the ground has strong symbolic value in Jones' writing. Owen explained that Jones understood people's existence as being dependant on the creation of a foothold (Owen, 2019). However, Owen opened up this translation, looking at the term as a foot space that exists not just as an experience of the mind but also in the experiences of the body (Owen, 2019). The use of this foot space is a way to describe how a people tacitly know who they are, and where they come from. In my thinking around this term, I wanted to extend it so as to link to the idea of where one positions oneself in terms of a physical territory. That is, the earth in which one inserts one's

footprint re-activates the sense of belonging to a people. The act is significant in that the placing of the foot within a specific place is a political act. I believe that by doing this, you lay claim to that place. As much imaginary as real, *troedle* grounds us and works to resist the process of forgetting – *Angof* (Owen, 2019).

Owen's examination of these terms gave me an insight into the challenges of translating *Prydeindod* into English. I was reminded of how I had attempted to understand this text through machine translations, which gave a literal translation of the text without considering the nuance and complexities of each word. As Owen discussed these complexities, it solidified my hunch that my quest as the *Welsh Dunce,* to will my Welshness to seep into the text, allowing for an understanding that was beyond words, was one of inevitable failure. And yet, during that investigation I held onto a mystical belief that the connection between being embedded in this land and believing that its language was carried within me, passed on in the form of a collective memory, could be excavated. This suggestion of a collective memory is a way in which Welsh people who have lost their language can still feel part of a nation. Being of a place and part of a people, Owen discusses, is a form of *interpenetration* of land and language that resides in people's souls (Owen, 2019).[31]

Simon Gwyn Roberts' paper was an exploration of borders, identity, territory and language. He discussed issues in these terms from both a Welsh and global perspective. Much of the

[31] The term 'interpenetration' is used by Jones as a connection between land and language. A difficult term to define in the English language, it includes the 'spirit of the people' as part of this (Phillips, 1995, p. 48). 'Interpenetration' includes not only the many ways that the Welsh language and other performed aspects of Welsh identity and life interact but also the way that British sovereignty impacts on this identity (Phillips, 1995, p. 54). Jones contests that 'although Britishness has interpenetrated with the lives of Welsh people, it has not interpenetrated with their formal character as a people, that is, the interpenetration of land and language' (Phillips, 1995, pp. 51-52). It is the interpenetration of the language into a people's daily lives, traditions and history that, for Jones, shapes identity and nationhood.

talk was in the form of accounts of his journeys through borders across the world, including Transdniester, a break-away republic at the border between Moldova and the Ukraine, Senegal, Macedonia and Kosovo, telling of the complexities and interdependencies of identity and nationhood in the contemporary world (Roberts, 2019). Using these accounts, Roberts outlined four types of border: ambiguous, phantom, colonial and liminal. Ambiguous borders are where cultural identities can slide between national and local constructions. They are also where multilinguistic, non-dominating cultures are able to reside and where identities are most mobile. Phantom borders tend to be territories that are not officially recognised, such as in the case of a break-away republic like Transdniester. They are the borders of phantom states. Colonial borders are entrenched in their historical contexts of occupation and imperialism. Finally, Roberts defined liminal borders, where identities are in a state of becoming or in flux.

Roberts stressed language as being central to the formation of identities, but its use depends on what type of border is in operation. Some borders are defined by the domination of one language over another, whereas other borders promote the adoption of a multilinguistic identity, promoting regional, national and in some cases multinational languages, as in the case of Roberts' experience in West Africa, where he heard a number of different languages being spoken by his guides when they conversed with each other.

Roberts observed a number of ambiguous cultural markers at the border of North East Wales. In his talk he made a convincing argument for people being able to adopt both a local and national identity at the same time. From the perspective of my own research, I was interested in how Roberts proposed a celebration of ambiguous borders; after all, other border communities have made their ambiguity politically constructive in terms of

transcending definitive identities and allegiances, being able to give a voice to those at the margins of a country and attaining a power to 'mobilise a specific identity strategy of localism' (Roberts, 2019). This capacity to celebrate the ambiguity of national and cultural identity is useful as it allows me to traverse the in-between space of polemics, weaving provocative visual propositions that attempt to re-imagine the diverse assessments of how national identity is constructed.

Although not as well attended as I had hoped (there were around ten people who had made their way through the dark, wind and rain), the symposium did open a valuable dialogue between theory and practice. It would be unfair of me not to confess that the symposium was a device by which I could validate and enhance my understanding of the themes that I believed had a direct impact on my thinking throughout the PhD. It was interesting that both speakers emphasised the importance of language as part of the construction of identity, whether at an individual, cultural or national level. As Owen explained in his talk, J.R. Jones believed that to be a nation was not just about claiming land and sovereignty, it must also include a claim to a language. As one of the main crisis points in my own national identity formation, it would appear to be an impossibility to claim oneself as Welsh without possessing the ability to speak it. Thankfully, Owen showed that Jones gave the non-Welsh speaker a way to connect with their national identity in the form of an interpenetration of land and identity where 'one's identity may have been formed by generations of activity before one's birth' (Owen, 2019). In this reading I can imagine my sense of identity as deeply set within actions of generations before me. However, given the fact that my family are a mixture of Swedish, Flemish and Welsh, my identity is a record of migrations. This might explain my inability to anchor myself in just one concept of national identity and why I complicate the issue.

Figure 21: Frontier Territory (2018/2019) Paul R Jones. Exhibition photo. © Paul R Jones. All rights reserved.

By presenting the work within the space of the gallery, where it was activated as *artwork* (Groys, 2013), I was able to generate meaningful conversations, producing data that would help me situate the practice alongside the written element of the PhD, testing out the validity of the original inquiry and also examining how the fragments of practice could be brought together as an accumulation of provocations and new knowledge.

Originally, I had a suspicion that the artistic inquiries I had made over the duration of the research were, overall, disparate. What I mean by this is that they did not form a comprehensible body of practice; rather, the work was intrinsically fragmented. Perhaps this was due to the nature of how I approached the PhD, looking at flags, borders and

language as examples of cultural markers. Here my question centred around asking if I would be able to bring all these works together so that they clearly supported and articulated the main inquiry of the PhD.

Through this exercise, I was able to draw attention to the fact that my inquiry places art making as an essential part of the PhD. What I mean by this is that the artwork is an important factor in producing new knowledge. I also realised that by presenting the artistic inquiry as an exhibition, I was no longer only generating work for the PhD, but for an audience too. After all, it is what artists aim to do, to make something that is then sent into the world to be interpreted, assessed and consumed (both economically and culturally) by a public. In each artistic inquiry, the activation of the public space is where, in essence, I am no longer in control of the work but allow the audience to own it. Of course, I am aware that the message that the artist intends to transmit is never guaranteed. This can be considered in terms of the work made during the research, in that no matter how much I attempt to write and speak about what I intend for the work, once it is presented to an audience, their reading of it is drawn from their own experience. This means that I cannot dictate how the work will be received. I am aware of not declaring too much of the work through the writing. Essentially, art operates at an affective level and, as Chantal Mouffe proposes, aims to mobilise passions (Mouffe, 2019). What is possible is to create a space in which an audience can encounter and negotiate opposing points of view.

For me, *Frontier Territory* made visible the relationship between how identity is formed and subjectively interpreted within a specific territory – for example, how my practice responded to the Wales/England border region. What this exercise confirmed, in terms of reflecting on the aims of the PhD, is that my work is driven by the autobiographical and that

I interrogate my own sense of cultural identity through my art practice. This in turn hopefully resonates with the audience, who are provoked to examine these issues from their own perspectives.

I consider *Frontier Territory* not simply an exhibition but a heterotopia, that is, a space through which to project my anxieties as to how I comprehend my national identity and question certain cultural markers that dictate this. It allowed me to be both playful and provocative, setting up a stage from which to present works that exposed and teased out the absurdities of such an inquiry. By doing this, I realised I should celebrate and accept the fragmented nature of the work. Through this realisation, each of the artistic inquiries can be understood as heterotopic frictions, in the sense that they awkwardly rub against other sites of identity construction. The complexity is amplified when the counter-site makes contact with the real site, as in the more interventionist works.[32] The reach of my exhibition included how artistic inquiry weaves through, grafts onto, operates in opposition to and prompts multiple reading of identity and territory.

[32] These include *Guardians of the Border* (2016), the public performances for *Welsh Dunce/Twysyn* (2018) and *Prydeindod (The Walk)* (2015).

CONCLUSION: Foothold

This PhD was written during a time of uncertainty both in the UK and globally. We are living through a period of militarised border zones, xenophobic social relations and uneven geographies. Francis Fukuyama observes that national identity in Europe is at a crisis point, and argues that this is historically partly due to the EU's attempts to weaken individual national identities in order to create a pan-European one (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 153). He writes that it is unclear if being 'European' creates a stronger identity than that offered by national states. In the early period of the EU, it was politically unacceptable for member states to celebrate their national identity too publicly. This worked for a time, as countries such as Germany and Italy were able to downplay their fascist histories in order to carve out a positive, open and collaborative sense of identity (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 144). However, now under the threat of mass migration and the growing disparities in wealth between the rich north and the cripplingly austere economic conditions in the south of Europe, an awareness of individual national variances has become more emphasised (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 145). This has led to a point of crisis as a national identity is defined by what happens politically and economically, locally and globally. Europe is carefully watching how the UK deals with the Brexit gamble. Other countries have started to test the possible opportunities of how to survive a post-EU Europe. This includes the Visegrad Group of Scandinavian countries, and separatist movements in Scotland, Italy, Catalonia and Belgium. Closer to home, we can see this crisis being played out in the UK and Wales with the fear of a no-deal Brexit being a possible outcome. From 2018 onwards, there have been a number of political groups, including Plaid Cymru, YesCymru and Sovereign Wales, calling for an independent Wales. Figures from a survey commissioned for YesCymru by YouGov in 2017 showed that the

majority of the population questioned were opposed to Wales becoming independent. However, with the threat of a no-deal Brexit and the danger of its detrimental impact on the Welsh economy, advocates of independence are becoming more confident in their rhetoric (Shipton, 2019).

This journey was about discovering how to visually articulate who one is and where one resides. In the artistic inquiry, I played with the characteristics of cultural markers and placed myself between a plurality of propositions. I problematised my identity and its relationship to territory and language in multiple ways. This included creating a series of artistic inquiries exploring geographical, cultural and national markers (flags, language and borders) that allowed for a plurality of readings. These configurations of territorialisation (Storey, 2012) were examined through artistic inquiries that highlighted their ability to *communicate*, *classify*, *re-enforce* and *displace* (Sack, 1986).

By conducting the research, I now understand that pathos is a useful device in my art practice. This is an ability to play upon an audience's emotions through an action or object that does not appear to succeed fully in its objective, or something that appears somewhat self-undercutting or vulnerable, for example in *Welsh Dunce (Twpsyn): Welsh Lesson* (2018). It is here that a space is created in which an emotional connection is instigated. The pathetic can nullify, invite empathy, activate desires, or expose the ridiculousness of a situation.

During the research I came to realise how much my artistic practice makes use of the principles of heterotopia. I cognised the term 'heterotopia' through a reading of Foucault (1986), Tompkins (2014) and Horlet (2014), and I furthered this analysis by developing the concept of heterotopic frictions by way of Mouffe (2013 & 2018), Bishop (2004) and Helguera (2011).

Hancock, Faramelli and White read heterotopias as political, aesthetic and bodily (Hancock, Faramelli, & White, 2020, p. 8). They observe Foucault's 'conceptualised heterotopias as largely being either spaces of crisis or of deviation' (Hancock, Faramelli, & White, 2020, p. 4). Many of my artistic inquiries are situated in what Foucault describes as a *heterotopia of deviance* (Foucault, 1986), meaning that they operate outside of the norms of society. In this sense, they are counteractions that encourage heterotopic frictions. The definition of this term was arrived at through an extended cross-disciplinary reading of Mouffe and Foucault. I proposed heterotopic friction as a method by which a relationship between identity, territory and language could be subjectively framed and explored. This approach opened an agonistic space in which to magnify how identity can be performed in relation to acts of territoriality. Heterotopic frictions are introduced at the slipping of the imagined into the actual, and, like Tompkins' description of the heterotopia in theatre, they appear only for short bursts of time. Like artistic practice, theatre can create worlds within worlds that are both actual locations (the stage) or abstracted (the imagined). This world-making, for Tompkins, can have a direct effect on how we understand and interpret the real world and its culture.

The fleeting appearance of heterotopic frictions emerges with the support of a material channel. In the artistic inquiries, these include the performer's body, flags, language and geographical borders. Identified as markers of territory, they are appropriated to instigate resistance to dominant narratives. In other words, they are presented in such a way as to unsettle, subvert and reimage ways of perceiving one's sense of identity and sense of place. The intrusion of heterotopic frictions is where counter-imaginings of subjective worlds momentarily protrude into and occupy reality.

Each chapter (borders, flags, language) examined this within a singular case, giving an account of how territoriality operates both as theoretical construct and as physical encounter. In the artistic inquiry, I articulate my practice methodologically by means of pathos and heterotopic frictions. I propose that the concept of heterotopic friction and my artistic inquiry contribute to the existing knowledge and culture within the field of visual art practice.

The artists studied throughout the research project are culturally diverse. However, all believe that identity, territory and language are politically charged and they, in their artistic practice, visualise and communicate this. Each one generates artworks from a point of subjectivity. Some operate from the position of outsider, such as in the examples of Francis Alÿs, Claus Beck-Nielsen, Clare Charnley and Marcus Coates, whilst others work from the perspective of being an insider, as in the case of Larrisa Sansour, Zineb Sedira and Paul Davies, be that as a language speaker, or identifying with a people through *jus soli* or *jus sanguinis.*

Each chapter focused on how markers of territory can be specifically appropriated to explore their association with identity construction, or, as in some cases, deconstruction. In chapter 1 I situated the artistic inquiry through the lens of reading my identity as precarious, fluid and ambiguous. I found that by declaring myself a border dweller, I was promoting a connection to a place which is itself fluid in terms of how cultural identity is formed and used. The artistic inquiry played with these 'fuzzy' border spaces, highlighting the importance of the historical and geographical specificity of place in my practice. In this instance, the border is a medium and a performance space. Chapter 2 introduced how material culture acts as a device by which to politicise and dramatise the crisis of identity

formation and management. Flags and banners operate as territorial markers but can be destabilised. In the artistic inquiry, banners, national flags and flags created for an imagined country were used in order to question or disrupt concepts of cultural identity. The most difficult of the artistic inquiries, but also the most revealing, was developed in chapter 3. In this chapter, the artistic inquiry visualised my anxiety about being a speaker of the 'colonial' language, that is, only speaking English. Here I questioned how I could define my Welsh identity if I am unable to speak the Welsh language. Performed through the character of *Twpsyn* (The Welsh Dunce), I attempted to channel my inherent Welshness, by way of *troedle,* as presented by Roger Owen in his paper on J.R. Jones' writing during the symposium for the exhibition.

Referring to the work of anthropologist Victor Turner, Lewis observes that culture is not simply a thing but something that is performed (Lewis, 2018, p. 4). As the research *through* practice progressed, I realised that I was enabling my becoming, similar to the approach taken by Lewis when describing the process of *poieses*. The artistic inquiry and the writing are both processes of revealing, testing and transforming perceptions of my sense of cultural position. This method of visually and verbally articulating perceptions of culture and identity becomes what Lewis describes as 'a part of the way we come to understand who we are' (Lewis, 2018, p. 216).

To conclude, the research indicates that there is scope for Anglo-Welsh artists to examine the particulars of their cultural individuality alongside that of more established Welsh artists making artworks examining their own marginal identity. This thesis revealed my Anglo-Welsh identity as an internalised struggle from the position that identity, in its relationship to territory, is culturally and politically constructed and precarious. It suggests that my

identity is purposely undefined so as to celebrate ambiguity and ambivalence as part of the art practice. This realisation is most evident in the exhibition *Frontier Territory.* The artistic inquiry attempted to either bring me closer to a Welsh sense of identity or project a more fractious account of self. I feel that my identity is 'perpetually in-between' (Bohata, 2004, p. 154), existing within the hyphen. Overall, the thesis operated as a site from which I performed *conundrums of being* through a process of imagining and re-imagining the complexities of identity, nationhood and acts of territoriality.

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